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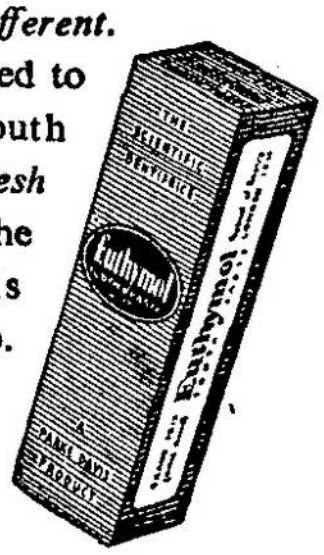

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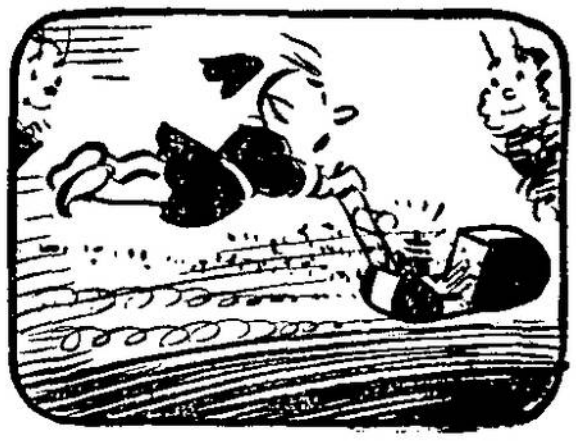

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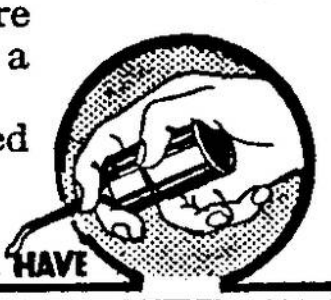

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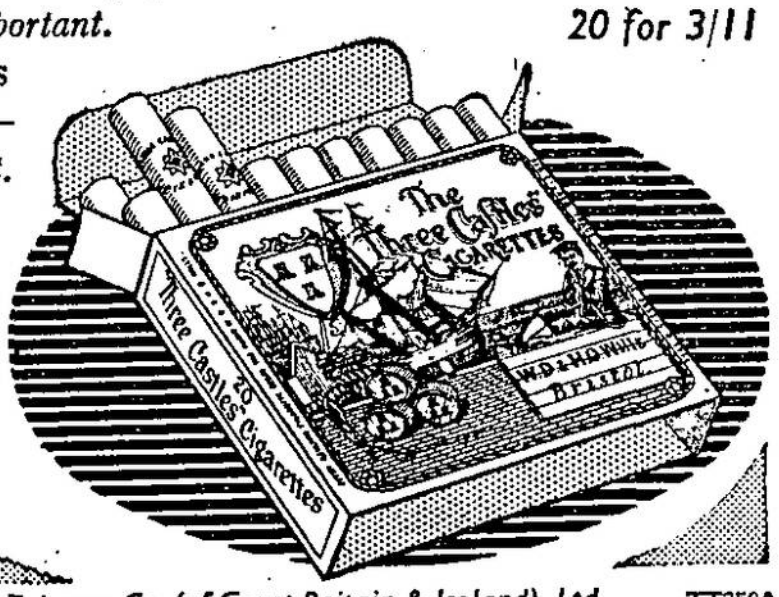

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ARGOSY

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Printed in England by Withy Grove Press Ltd., Manchester, and published on the 10th of each month by The Amalgamated Press Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Registered for Transmission by Canadian Magazine Post. Subscription Rates: Inland and Abroad: £1 0s. 6d. for 12 months, 10s. 3d. for 6 months. Canada: 19s. 6d. for 12 months, 9s. 9d. for 6 months. Advertisement Offices: Tallis House, Tallis Street, London, E.C.4. Sole Agents: Australasia, Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd.; South Africa, Central News Agency, Ltd.; Northern and Southern Rhodesia, Messrs. Kingstons Ltd.

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Barcarole

HOME from their fishing, over the quiet water,
The coloured sails returned.
Before them all the domes and towers of Venice
In the deep sunset burned.

The still lagoon was full of coloured shadows.
Your face was like a flower.
The winged Lion darkened on the splendour,
And it was Titian's hour.

Over the shining flood the sails came softly,
Saffron and rose and white.
Brown throats among the tawny nets uplifted
A love-song to the night.

The sunset moved before them like a banner
That into darkness flows.
The sunset and the sails moved on together,
Saffron and white and rose.

ALFRED NOYES

SET IN SILVER

"One is shut today," panted the old woman.
"One regrets, Madame"

by EVELYN EATON

IN 1935, I bought a small hut, called a *bastidon*, with an acre of ground, on the outskirts of the village of Callian, in the Var. I knew and liked that part of Provence, though I was a stranger to Callian itself, except for once having driven through it in a friend's car, stopping to lunch at the inn on freshly caught trout and raspberry *tartines*.

The day I was to move into my *bastidon*, I watched my furniture piled on a van outside the rented villa I had occupied in Cannes, took my typewriter, hand luggage, and a case of fragile things I wanted to safeguard, and caught the bus express that ran from Cannes to Draguignan. For a consideration, the driver agreed to deposit me in Callian, "although we do not actually *stop* there," he explained, "so Madame must be quick at the descent."

When we reached Callian, I descended as nimbly as I could with so many bags and bundles. I left them at the bus station in the care of a boy who was to deliver them to the *bastidon* by wheelbarrow, and made my way to the office of the notary to get the deed and my key. His name was Corbeau—straight out of the fables of Jean de La Fontaine. He spoke with a throaty caw and it would not have surprised me to come on him "perched upon a tree."

When I arrived at his office, full of the excitement and eager anticipation of a new *propriétaire*, I found Maître Corbeau in no hurry to conclude our transaction. First, we must drink together from his own wine.

"My vineyard is near your earth," he said. Also, he said that we must avoid to walk in the heat of the day, and it was half an hour's steady climb from the village to the *bastidon*. "*Peu commode* for carrying things from the bus," he concluded.

"My things are being delivered by wheelbarrow," I said. "I found an obliging boy who will make the necessary trips."

'The little Ratineau?" he asked.

"I believe so."

"How much did he ask?"

"Five francs for two trips," I said.

Maître Corbeau pursed his mouth. "It was prudent of Madame

to engage him only twice," he said. "After that should come discussion. For regular trips, of course, he must take less."

"But it requires only *two* trips," I said, bewildered.

"For Madame to make up her mind," said Maître Corbeau. "Exactly. When it is made up, she must not hesitate to point out to the young Ratineau that there are others in this village with their wheelbarrows who would demand nothing better than to meet the bus and deliver Madame's things. There is Espitalier, who passes daily by her house with a cart. Confidentially, young Ratineau is best. Espetalier is often drunk and always impatient. He will not wait for the bus to arrive if it is late. Who knows how many times he would fail to appear?

"Madame is safe with Ratineau. That one is serious. But he must be made to reduce his price."

"I don't understand," I said. "There can be no question of regular employment. It is only today that my luggage needs to be transported to the *bastidon*."

"I am thinking of Madame's marketing," Maître Corbeau explained. "The nearest market is in Grasse. She does not need to attend it personally. She can give her list to Rouvier, the bus driver, once a week, twice a week, as often as she needs. He does the buying while the bus is in Grasse. It waits there all day. It goes the once and returns the once, with packages. Then one pays Rouvier his commission, which is reasonable—less than the cost of the fare—and one takes the produce home. Since Madame lives uphill, so long a walk, it is prudent of her to engage a wheelbarrow."

"I do not mind the walk," I said. "I have a knapsack in which to carry my provisions, and I think I will buy what I need locally, a little at a time."

A strange expression traversed Maître Corbeau's face. "You can try," he said, dropping the ceremonial third person.

I thought he took my attitude as an admission of indigence or possibly of parsimony, which, however laudable in the native-born, would be a crime in a foreigner, and I expected that now he would bring our interview to an end. Instead, he poured himself more wine and began to talk of Rouvier, the bus driver.

"His ancestors ran errands for the village in the tenth century," Maître Corbeau said. "There has always been a Rouvier in Callian who was the *colporteur*—first on foot, then with a mule, then with horses, and now with a motorbus. In all that time, not one was found dishonest. A record, *hein*?"

I said it was indeed, and shuffled my feet, impatient to take key and deed and climb the hill to my new home, to await the arrival of young Ratineau with his wheelbarrow and the van from Cannes with my furniture.

But Maître Corbeau was not to be hurried. He leaned back reflectively, and began to tell me the history of Callian from the days of King René, in 1441. My attention wandered to a picture hanging behind his head, in which an angry countenance in a cloud was admonishing an angel holding a thunderbolt to get busy and strike with it. The caption read: "*Au Tout Puissant irrité, et à son ange vengeur, frappant de la contagion de la Peste le peuple de Callian.*"

I felt, as Maître Corbeau talked on, that I understood what had irritated the Almighty, and could sympathize with His decision to strike the people of Callian with the plague or with anything else that might insure dispatch of one's affairs.

As we reached the seventeenth century, I stood up and held out my hand for the deed and the key. This was rude. Maître Corbeau, cut off in the midst of his eloquence, sighed. He got documents and key from his desk, picked up his hat, showed me out, and accompanied me across the village square.

As we walked through the square, we passed two of the shops where I intended to do my marketing. The windows of both were dark and small, and one could scarcely see what was displayed in them.

I glanced through the doorway of the *épicerie* and got the impression of a large, dim room stretching away forever, with shelves and tables piled with goods. It seemed probable that I would find there the articles I might require, especially if I bought most of the perishable things—eggs, milk, vegetables, fruit, and poultry—from farmers near my house.

Maître Corbeau left me at the foot of the hill. Wheelbarrow and van were in front of the *bastidon* when I arrived. I spent the next two days unpacking and getting things straight. Since I had brought enough food and household supplies from Cannes to last a week, I did not need to investigate the shops of Callian at once.

Presently, however, I ran out of soap and *eau de javelle*, and I also thought I would like to buy a mouse-trap, some ant powder, and an extra casserole. I walked down the hill one morning before the heat could strike, my knapsack on my back, and went directly to the general store. It was called the Maison Arbetier, according to a sign in faded letters over the door. The doorway was screened by a bamboo curtain hanging from a rod, on which also hung a row of tarnished bells. I pushed the curtain aside, the bells rang, and I went in.

The place was apparently deserted. There was a musty, old-fashioned smell—a mixture of camphor, beeswax, leather, and peppermint. Candles, kerosene lamps, chains, hinges, nails,

nightcaps, dishes, bottles with grey powder in them were heaped and scattered in no sort of order on the shelves. I roamed among them, interestedly sniffing, picking up this and that. Suddenly my eyes fell on a small bronze casserole—such a casserole as might have graced a Provençal kitchen a hundred years before. It had a well-fitting cover, a handle that caressed the grasping hand. It was a jewel of a casserole.

I lifted up my voice and called, "*Allô ! Allô !*" as though I were on the telephone, and, "Madame ! Monsieur ! Is there anyone there ?"

No one responded, and I walked towards the door with the casserole in my hand, to look at it in the light. It needed only to be burnished with the juice of a lemon to shine like an angel. I said this aloud to the silence.

Then a door in the back of the shop opened and a woman came in—a typical crone, in rusty black, with a cap on her head, grey hair drawn tight beneath it, a lined, waxen face, and little puffed hands.

She came towards me, at a steady, purposeful trot that somehow alarmed me, like the advance of a hostile pug whose snapping couldn't do much harm but might be a nuisance around one's feet. "*Fermé !*" she panted. "*Fermé !* One is shut today."

"But the door was open and there was no sign," I said.

"One is shut today. One regrets, Madame." She made a gesture towards the bamboo curtain.

"But I wanted to buy this," I said. "How much is it ?"

"One is shut. One is shut," she said. "Nothing can be sold. Impossible !" She took the casserole out of my hands, held it for a moment uncertainly, then put it on a heap of men's undershirts on a shelf behind her. "One would not part with it in any case. Madame has time to reach Rouvier before his departure. Rouvier will buy her anything she needs."

"Not a casserole like that," I said.

"Understood," she said. "One does not find a casserole like that easily today, in Grasse, or Provence—or," she added, "in France, either," as though Provence were not to be considered part of France.

"In that case—" I began.

"It is not for sale," she said.

"But it is just the casserole I want !"

"Madame imagines that to want is enough ?" The dumpy black figure bent over, wheezing with laughter. "*Ça, par exemple !*" She put a hand on my arm.

"She's crazy," I thought as she propelled me to the door and pushed me firmly out. "*Fermé, fermé, fermé !*" she said, drawing

the bamboo curtain. I heard the door behind the curtain close and the sound of a bolt being shot into place.

Standing nonplussed in the street, I tried to invent explanations to satisfy myself. She was some insane relative of the owner of the shop, who had left her in charge for the day, or today was a fête and the shop had to be closed.

But in that case why did she expect the shops in neighbouring Grasse to be open? Was it a purely local fête? Even so, when there was a customer, cash in hand, ready to conclude a sale, it was unlike any French shopkeeper I had previously encountered not to make the transaction.

I went across the square. The *épicerie* was open. If there was a fête, it was evidently not one for grocers to observe. I was cheered momentarily, but I was at once informed by M. Loubeau, the proprietor, that to his regret his establishment contained no soap, no *eau de javelle*, no ant powder—nothing of interest to Madame, who would do well to make instant contact with M. Rouvier. M. Rouvier would still be available if Madame made some haste, and he would attend to her wants in Grasse.

I saw bars of soap and bottles of *javelle* on one of the nearest shelves, but I could not get past M. Loubeau's dignified resistance. I was escorted from his shop on a wave of courtesy, convinced that the people of Callian detested foreigners and took this method of declaring it. Their hatred, I thought, must be strong—stronger than self-interest.

I was depressed. I crossed the square again and entered the baker's with some hesitation. Here I was served with a cheerful indifference that revived my heart and made me buy more of the long, crusty, good fresh loaves than I needed. I set off up the hill.

A few days later, I decided to capitulate and order the things I needed through Rouvier, since there seemed to be no other way of getting them. I went in search of the young Ratineau, and after an animated discussion, accompanied by much waving of arms and tossing about of such phrases as "simple justice," "regularity of service," and "the weight of the wheelbarrow," I made a deal with him to deliver packages from bus to *bastidon* for what I felt the notary—whom I threatened to summon to protect my interests—would call a "friendly price."

I got my soap and *eau de javelle* next day, and presently a supply of groceries was being delivered to me twice a week. But I was curious and resentful still, and I thought, sometimes, of the casserole.

One day when I felt brave, I made another attempt to become a customer of the Maison Arbetier. This time I heard voices as I parted the bamboo curtain. A man I recognized—a native of Callian,

no foreigner—was leaning over the counter, pleading breathlessly with the old woman.

"It is an emergency," I heard him say. "You know well I would not trouble you otherwise, my friend. How many times have I been here in the last six months? Not once!"

"Well," she conceded, "but—"

"Rouvier is already gone," the man said. "We cannot wait until tomorrow. *Voyons*, it is only a little that I need."

"I will oblige you this time only, then, for the sake of our good friendship," the woman said. Then she saw me. "*Fermé, fermé, fermé!*" she shouted.

The man turned upon me, too. "This establishment is closed!" he cried shamelessly.

"Except, of course, in an emergency," I said tentatively, looking towards my casserole.

"Ah, no!" said the crone. "You will not sing me that one! *Par exemple!* They are in the town a month and they think they can have an emergency! They come to bother us with their needs and their notions, to deplete our goods. *Fermé*, I say. *Fermé!*"

I retreated, but I had learned one curious thing. It was not because I was a foreigner, or even, necessarily, a late-comer, that I could not buy my casserole. Nobody could buy from the Maison Arbetier or the *épicerie* except in a genuine emergency. It occurred to me that I had seen all the inhabitants of Callian meekly doing their marketing through Rouvier, which should have shown me I was no exception.

I felt I must know the answer. I made a pretext of needing help with a tax form I had to complete, and called on Maître Corbeau. We concluded this business and had a pleasant talk. Then I put my question.

"Ah," he said, shaking his head and smiling at me, "if Madame had not been in such a hurry on the day of the delivery of the deed, if she had listened patiently to my discourse on the history of Callian, she would know the answer. I was on the way to telling her. But women, especially the young and lovely"—he bowed gallantly—"are impatient. And foreigners!" He raised his eyes and shrugged energetically to show the impatience of foreigners.

"Tell me about it now," I asked him.

"Very well," he said, pouring us each a glass of wine before he began.

The occupations in Callian were all hereditary, like Rouvier's, Maître Corbeau said. There had always been an Arbetier in general merchandise, a Loubeau in groceries, a Tisserand to sell tobacco, and a Doux to bake. The shops were handed down from

father to son, or to nephew or cousin—always kept in the family.

"They constitute a justification and a pedigree," he said. "Nobody would dream of changing his inherited occupation. Thus it went along, here in Callian, with our family stores supplying all our needs. Everyone worked hard then—oh, very hard—for a small profit. The sou was something to chase. Shutters came down early and went up very late. Until—if Madame will permit an excursion into the history which wearies her—there came the affair of the mine."

Maître Corbeau paused and looked at me questioningly. I nodded.

"In the Middle Ages," he continued, "the families of Callian owned a silver mine. It was rich and inexhaustible, but it was closed in 1680 by order of the King. Some fifty years ago, it was opened up again, and immediately certain of those families were rich. All the families, of course, had hung on to their shares."

"For two hundred years?" I interrupted.

"Naturally," he said. "The Arbetiers, the Loubeaux, the Tannerons, and the Tisserands had many shares. The Doux and others had only a few. For those who had many it was wealth, extreme wealth. Oh, I do not say that in Paris, for instance, it might not have been spent, with an effort, but the Callianais have always lived simply, in Callian.

"There were their shops, their houses above their shops, the customary train of life to be continued, and the needs of the village to be met, which was honourably done at first. But with millions in the sock, a gradual disinclination to bestir himself came over this one and that one. When the growth of transport made it possible for the village needs to be met in Grasse—well, commerce here fell off.

"Since the occupations are hereditary and a source of ancient pride, they are not to be abandoned lightly—that would be seen as ostentation and vainglory, a vulgar declaration that one considers oneself too big for one's ancestral boots—but that they are neglected, Madame has seen for herself. It must be thirty years since *la mère* Arbetier replenished her stock, and Loubeau's is almost as bad."

"The baker works," I said. "Why is that?"

"The Doux have only fifteen shares," said Maître Corbeau. "Ah, Madame, how little you and I might urge ourselves to do if we were the *propriétaires* of a silver mine! My ancestors were negligent, they came here late!"

He leaned back, smiling.

"So we content ourselves with merchandise from Grasse, inferior though it is."

"Especially the casseroles," I said, and rose to go. "By the

way," I added, "in the arrangement I made with the young Ratineau I used your name to impress him."

"You got a good price, I heard," Maître Corbeau said. "Let me know if he should neglect your affairs. There are new boys growing up, and fortunately not all of them have shares in the silver mine."

He bowed me out.

* * *

BUILDING LICENCE

—poetic or otherwise. Can you identify these architectural creations—wild fantasy or plain reality? Allow one point for recognizing the building, one for the source, and one for the author in each case. Special commendation for a score of twenty-one or over! The answers are on page 61.

1. *Seven years to build this prefabricated house—and three thousand three hundred foremen!*

2. *No card parties, no tea, no scandal in this vast and comfortless palace. But a frozen lake in the drawing-room, and in the middle the hostess, when she was at home.*

3. *A desirable residence, this living aerial mansion (safe from tigers, air-conditioned, splendid views of sea and coast, suit family)!*

4. *To a young lady unaccustomed to Societry, it was impressive, this house whose doors flung open as if by majic, its hall hung round with guns and mats and ancesters!*

5. *"Glazed brick, white mortar, and blue roof-tiles do not make a house beautiful . . ." read the inscription on the foundation stone of this ancient oriental homestead. "A man of cultivated mind makes a house of mud and wattle beautiful."*

6. *A simple bungalow of unpainted wood—but inside the walls were lit with colour, the work of a man who knew things which it is unholy for men to know, primeval and terrible, beautiful and obscene . . .*

7. *Huge, with roof of fretted gold, it arose like an Exhalation, with the sound of Dulcet Symphonies and voices sweet!*

8. *It was a snug little cottage, hidden away in its forest clearing, a fire on the floor, a white donkey living in the larder . . .*

9. *Lofty pillars, branching roof self-poised . . . They dreamt not of a perishable home Who thus could build.*

WARRIOR'S CHALLENGE

"My friend," said Enker, "I have found the lion I must kill"

by R. W. KREPPS

THE Sheep was my friend, and I was worried about him. For related reasons I felt uneasy about the lions. Sooner or later one of these problems would be solved, and I honestly couldn't make up my mind which one I wanted it to be. You see, if The Sheep killed a lion, the first worry would be over; whereas if he didn't kill a lion, that would finish the second.

I was living up country with the Masai; or perhaps I should say I was spending half my time with them and half with the lions. The Masai are a nomadic people of great pride, much beauty, and a congenital dislike for work of any sort. As a general thing, they despise anyone who hasn't had the luck to be born Masai, but for one reason and another they tolerated me. I spoke their language—learned it before I ever came to their country, from a fellow down at the Cape—and that pleased them no end, especially when they found I wasn't a missionary, but a loafing lazy devil like themselves. I was actually working on a book about South Africa, but you can't explain that to a Masai.

Well, I settled down in one of their long, low, mud-plastered wood houses, which are unlike other native huts in that they are divided into private apartments. I had the women fix me a neat brushwood bed with soft hides for blankets; I acquired a cooking pot and some gourds for milk, and bought a cow. I used to sit in the sun with the warriors and the old men, swapping awful lies and making notes for the book, and sometimes it would strike me that I'd never been more contented in my life.

There was one man whom I particularly liked, a wiry, well-made youth with finely cut features, whose looks were marred only by the usual lack of two lower front teeth; the Masai have been knocking these teeth out ever since the days when lock-jaw was prevalent among them and a way had to be found to feed the victims. It's a mark of elegance with them now, like the frightful stretched lips of the old-time Ubangi. This young fellow, though quite intelligent and presentable, seemed to be held in scorn by the warriors and, worse, by the girls. I began our friendship in pity, and soon discovered a calmly philosophical spirit in him that was

most pleasing. His name, or perhaps nickname, was Enker: The Sheep.

He had recently gone through the ceremonies that take a Masai from the ranks of the boys and make him a warrior, *ol-murrani.* He carried a long-bladed spear and a leaf-shaped sword, wore a goat-stomach cap and a vulture-feather cape, ankle fringes of white monkey's fur, and the horn arm-clamp which none but a fighter may wear. The only thing missing in his costume was the great head-dress of ostrich feathers and lion's mane. He had never killed a lion. That was the reason he was disdained.

I couldn't believe that he was a coward. When I had known him a while I asked him bluntly why he had not sought out his lion (in the bad old days it used to be a man you had to kill) and proved himself worthy to be called a warrior. Looking me straight in the eyes, he said, "I have not felt like it." It was unorthodox in a Masai, but I knew it was the truth. Enker simply had a mind of his own.

If he'd been a member of another tribe, this delay wouldn't have mattered a scrap. The Masai *murrani*, however, since he cannot now legally slay men, concentrates all his arrogant manhood in his prowess with lions. A warrior who puts off his first fight is little better than a woman.

I've mentioned the lions, the ones I was worried about. I had been living in the village for three weeks, or it might have been four, when I discovered them. After that I spent a good deal of my time stretched out on the warm grass of a hill top, in the shade of a couple of broad-crowned acacia trees, watching them. When the Masai found how I was occupying my days, they were more convinced than ever that I was a natural-born drone.

I'd go out about ten in the morning, wearing red-lined khaki drill and a double-brimmed felt hat to keep out the sun, with heelless Dutch *veldschoen* of cowhide that made no noise when I walked; I'd take some dried fruit to munch on, and maybe a gourd of sweet milk. Making a wide circle, I would come to my hill on the side farther away from the lions' lolling place. It took a while to climb it, for it was steep and tricky. At last I would reach the top and sprawl out under the acacias and look down at the bowl of cool, damp bush below me, and there would be the lions. Rarely was I disappointed. They were nearly always there, the whole pride of seven.

Pride is an old word for a troop of lions, and may even be obsolete, for all I know, but I like it. What other word befits the king so well?

There are many places in Africa where the lion still reigns. One of these—to my mind the finest of the lot—is the great rolling

savanna of East Africa inhabited by the Masai. Hot on the hills, cool in the valleys, all greens from olive to emerald, it pulses with its strange alien life beneath a sky that is higher and more blue than you ever see it elsewhere. Hundreds of millions of animals darken the land, eating and breeding and travelling and dying from year's end to year's end. Over these inexhaustible hordes rules the lion.

The leader of my pride was a tawny beast, not of the really golden shade, but more the colour of a well-used bar of yellow laundry soap. He was big—nearly five hundred pounds, I judged him—with a thick, tangled mane that flung back grandly from his forehead, and a hogshead of a chest all seamed with long-healed scars. He was a superb creature, just going into the last years of his prime. Ordinarily I deplore the gratuitous giving of names to wild animals, names that are often coy and silly; but in his case I couldn't say merely "the old one" or "the big fellow," so I called him el-Asad, which is Algerian Arabic for a tawny lion. It sounded rather grand. Arabic does, especially if, like me, you understand no more than a dozen words.

He had a pair of wives, fine large beauties both. Then there was a younger male, brown with a black mane, smaller and lighter on his feet and more restless than el-Asad. He had a wife too, a scrubby, dun-coloured lioness with a wall-eye, who nagged and fought with him. There was a very old sway-backed female who was probably a relative, for lions have a strong family instinct and take care of their own. To round out the pride, there was a cub that was just learning to kill for himself, a beast who would be a walloping giant when he got his growth, which was slow coming, for although he was well over a year old his paws were still too big for him.

They never did much of anything during the day, just lazed around and talked to themselves and stared at butterflies, for the most part, but I loved to watch them. As a flawlessly organized apparatus of energy, combining tremendous brawn with graceful beauty and nimble intelligence, the lion has no peer in Africa. How could one tire of viewing perfection?

I used to lie there until the sun had touched the rim of the plain, and then have to hurry home to the village before the lions set out to stalk their night's meal. So long as I stayed on the hill top I was perfectly safe, for a lion almost never looks up, and, besides, they would have had to scale a long stretch of bare rock to get at me, and sun-cooked rock burns a lion's pads till he nearly goes mad. In case of a showdown, of course, I always had my rifle handy, but it never came to that.

I did, indeed, run slap into el-Asad one morning, as he was ambling home from an all-night gorge of zebra. Had it been the younger, nervous Black Mane, I think I would have shot at once, for I never trusted his looks; but as it was the patriarch, I just stopped in my tracks to stare at a fluff of cloud and whistle a small tuneless tune, as though the last thing in my mind was the possibility of a lion being within fifty miles. By and by el-Asad gave a grunt and walked round me, and I watched him go, full belly flopping from side to side, until he had disappeared. This trick of ignoring a surprised lion I learned from an old hunter, who said it would work nine times out of ten. The tenth lion is the one to dread.

When I told the warriors about this incident—bragging is an honourable pastime among the Masai—my stock rose with them, because they said I obviously had the true feeling for lions. My friend Enker seemed fascinated by the story, and made me tell him all over again about the seven big cats who lay up below the hill.

We were having a mid-day snack: rice and tea for me and a noisome concoction of warm blood and milk, which forms the basic Masai diet, for Enker. Nothing would satisfy him but that we take weapons and go out immediately to have a look at the pride. So off we went, The Sheep and I, to a chorus of jeering yells.

"Observe, Enker goes to stare from a distance upon *ol-ngatuny*, whom he dares not face in battle!" and much more of the same savage small-boy humour. My friend ignored them with equanimity.

We came to the hill and climbed it, and, lying flat on our bellies, we peered over the edge together. All seven of my lions were at the retreat. I looked over at Enker and saw his lean, clever face alight with pleasure. He, too, had the feeling for lions, not only the sportsmanlike respect for a worthy rival that is common among his people, but also, I thought, a kind of reverence for the lithe, perfect kings of the cat tribe, a heathen fealty paid to these master-works of the gods. His brown eyes were wide and worshipping. I was glad that I had brought him.

We stayed on the hill for a couple of hours, and were rewarded by a sight I should not like to have missed.

For some time I had had the uncomfortable feeling that the black-maned male was the real boss of the troop, for all the size and majesty of el-Asad, because Black Mane was as cocky and insolent a brute as ever drew breath. He would stalk round and round the lying-up place, growling and making eyes at the old man's wives, and el-Asad, with his paws curled in like a kitten's, would blink and yawn and look bored. I feared that, for all his

obvious strength, he must be past his prime, or he would never have endured such impudence.

Today he had brought home a bloody haunch of eland, a meat to which his clan is very partial. He had been gnawing thoughtfully at this trophy, and then, growing thirsty, had gone off to the stream to lap up a little warm water. Returning, he discovered that the nervy Black Mane had appropriated the eland haunch.

"Now we will see who is chief," Enker whispered in my ear.

El-Asad trotted over and lowered his head until his flaring nostrils were within six inches of Black Mane's face. Then he roared, simply roared.

It was a shattering crash of a roar, an angry blast that literally shook the air where we were lying, thirty yards above his head. Rocks began to fall down the hillside, the very earth seemed to quiver. It felt and sounded as though someone had set off a charge of dynamite.

Black Mane laid his ears flat to his skull, opened his eyes till the whites showed plain, dropped the stolen titbit and got himself out of there, crawling backwards as fast as he could go. There was no longer a doubt, in his mind or in mine, as to who was the leader of the pride.

On the way home, Enker was silent and abstracted. Then, as we came to the tall fence of thorn bushes that circled the village, he spoke.

"My friend, I have found the lion which I must kill. He is the great yellow chieftain."

My heart actually gave a jump, for I was very fond of my pride of seven, and particularly fond of el-Asad. "Why do you choose him?"

"He is the finest lion I have ever seen. None lesser should be my first kill."

I had over-estimated The Sheep. He was, after all, a typical Masai in his thinking; the highest compliment he could pay a lion was to meet it in fair fight. Merely to watch and admire it, as I did, couldn't give his esteem full expression. No, he had to oil himself up and whet his spear and go out to try to butcher it.

That was when I started to worry about the lions. Heretofore I'd been unhappy about Enker.

Now it seemed that my concern over his softness was to be drowned in the blood of my friend el-Asad. I had twin troubles, and I couldn't decide which one I most desired to see ended.

The days went by, and apart from telling his intentions to the other *murran*, who laughed at him, Enker did nothing.

I stopped watching the lions, because it saddened me to think of their family breaking up. I have shot lions, and likely will again; but there's a great difference in killing a lion with whom you have no acquaintance, and seeing one killed whom you have long known and liked.

I suppose you might say I was sentimental about el-Asad, but then how many men are not sentimental about some animal or other? Would you like to live with the knowledge that a savage African was going to murder your favourite dog?

And the days went on, and still The Sheep did nothing.

When I had not seen my big cats for a week, their fascination dimmed a little, so that I found myself brooding more over the young warrior than over the catastrophe darkening el-Asad's future.

Enker was, after all, my good friend, and my inherent human sympathies were with him. His intelligence should have been making him an honoured place in the tribe, and the girls should have been serving him beef and brewing him honey-wine. Instead he was the butt of crude jokes, and a sorrow to his family. Was he not eighteen, of sound wind and tough limb? Then what was he doing here in the village, lying idle with his feet against a post like the father of many sons? . . .

At last, one evening, as we were watching the sun go down in a glory of gold-rimmed purple clouds athwart the dusky blue sky, I took a firm stand.

"Enker, my friend," I said, "you must stop this spineless dawdling. You must slay your lion."

He was quiet for a moment, while we followed a flight of little chirruping birds with our eyes. Then he said, "I am ready. It shall be tomorrow."

I felt a brief pang for el-Asad; but where a man's whole career and reputation are at stake, even a lion must take a back seat. "Why have you waited?" I asked him.

"You are over thirty," he said. "Have you taken a wife?"

"No."

"Have you thought of taking a wife?"

"Many times."

"And did you rush heedlessly into marriage on the first day you thought of it? No, you sat down and smoked and brooded for a long time about it." He looked over at me, handsome eyes slanted in what passes with the Masai for a wink. "Is a man's first lion then less important than his first wife, my friend? Or should he not concentrate his mind on *ol-ngatuny* for many days, weighing the beast's worth, and his own readiness, and the method of the slaying?"

"*Aiya!*" I said. "That is so. A woman is only a woman, but a good lion is the eighth wonder of the world."

"And that is truth. A man remembers his first lion all his life. When he is old he gathers his grandchildren and fights the animal with words for their benefit. As he dies he feels its claws again, and takes pride in the long-ago kill." He stood up. The vivid African stars were already blazing above us. "Tomorrow I take my first lion."

"And must it surely be the yellow one? He is a noble beast."

"That is why it must be the yellow lion," Enker explained.

He went away to polish his weapons. I sat there by myself, feeling moody and old and lonesome.

The next morning we assembled for the hunt. Now that Enker had made up his mind, he was the hero of the hour. The contrast with his former indolence had produced a sharp reaction in the tribe. All the young warriors were eager to go with him, to act as beaters. The elders were giving him last-minute advice, and the women were throwing grass and spitting at him to bring luck.

The Sheep himself was bedecked to the hilt. His all-but-naked body was greased with ochre clay and fat; his fur anklets were lustrous, his pigtail was plaited with fresh leather strips, and his horn arm-clamp shone with much rubbing.

He was in a hysterical temper, froth on his lips, his eyes dilated and shot with red. He had been nursing this passion for hours, so that it was at its peak. Unable to stand still, he bounded about, flourishing his sword, shouting unintelligibly, and gnashing his teeth in a horrible fashion.

He was no longer my calm, sensible friend, but a fanatical, dangerous killer. Yet truly I couldn't grieve over the change, for his race is hard on nonconformists. His life would be easier after this display of conventional Masai madness.

As we started out—I was going with them, of course—I passed his father, who smiled proudly and said to me, "He is like a hyena's sinew, so tough he will never know defeat."

"*Hoi!*" I said admiringly.

We headed for the lying-up place of the seven, flung out in a wide-spaced line that spanned the rolling plain from the rocky outcrop of a chain of hills to the green palms that marked a water-course. The warriors chanted and sang. Enker marched in the centre, with me beside him, my heavy rifle slung over my shoulder. A little *duikerbok* bounced out of the grass ahead of us and dived away into a hidden pothole. Myriads of insects made their drowsy

noises. A bold silver-speckled lizard ran up my leg and leaped off again.

"There is the hill of the lion chief," shouted The Sheep at last. "There waits the yellow one, waits for my spear to kiss his breast!"

Poor old el-Asad, I said to myself; what an end to his placid, powerful life. I couldn't doubt that this raving barbarian next to me must surely conquer him.

We approached the secret bowl of cool green bush, and one of the lionesses came out and looked at us inquiringly and disappeared. The warriors set up a howling. Enker shook his weapons and snapped like an angry dog.

The lioness must have told el-Asad about us, for a few minutes later his own broad muzzle poked out between the leaves that half hid the entrance to his lair. He studied our noisy gang for a moment, and then withdrew, coughing.

Suddenly the thought occurred to me: this beast knows what he's about, he has seen the lines of men come over the plain before. I don't know what put the idea into my head. I simply believed it, all at once, and felt sure that such an old stager as el-Asad must be wise in the ways of the Masai.

"By God," I said aloud in English, "I'll bet he won't be there when we hit the place!"

And he wasn't. The bowl was empty of life save for an iridescent blue jay, who scolded us peevishly as we broke through the brush. "He flies from my wrath," shrieked Enker, although to me the withdrawal of the pride was more in the nature of a lot of dignified giants leaving the vicinity of an annoying mosquito swarm. "He trembles with fear!"

With two or three companions Enker went on across the bowl, while the others skirted it and I scrambled up the almost sheer rock face of the hill for twenty feet or so, to have a look at the country.

On the side opposite to that from which we had come, the plain was quite flat, cut by a single shallow dry gully, the only one within sight. It could not have been more than half a yard deep, and was filled with thick grass.

Along this meagre cut el-Asad was shepherding his troop. They were going on their bellies, heads low and tails dragging. The females were in the lead, then the cub, with Black Mane and the big fellow at the rear. It was a most orderly retreat, and I would have wagered my rifle that the expressions on their faces were irritable but in no way afraid.

The Masai gathered in a loose mob near the lair, and began

jumping up and down, trying to locate the lions. They did not shout to me. If they had, I really don't know whether I'd have told them where el-Asad was. My loyalties were divided that day, and in a hopeless muddle.

The Masai started to cast out from the hill like hounds at fault. I was surprised that they could not see the quarry. A lion can hide himself in a patch of grass which you'd swear wouldn't harbour a dozen quail, but it seemed to me that Enker and his men should at least have noticed the gully. However, they were at the pitch of their hunting frenzy, their eyes suffused with blood, and I imagine their sight was none too keen. It looked as though they were going to lose their lion for good.

Then, away in the invisible distances, an ostrich boomed hollowly like a lost kettledrum; and that chuckle-headed Black Mane raised his head and answered with a reverberating grunt.

I groaned in disgust.

The four females, followed by the clumsy yearling, shot out of the gully and ran for the nearest hill, which was about half a mile farther on.

Black Mane watched them go, his whole body expressing astonishment. You might have thought he hadn't the intellect of a bumble-bee.

As for the leader, I expected to see him turn at bay to keep the Masai from following his charges.

Not he! Patient with the other's lofty airs in time of peace, he would not bear insubordination in the face of the enemy. He stood up slowly. Giving a brief but ear-splitting bellow, he launched his great body full at Black Mane. He had not even glanced back at the warriors, who had been racing towards him, but who now dug in their heels and skidded to a halt, spreading out to watch the fight.

And it was a fight. None of the petulant slapping and half-hearted nips that lion gives lion when they're quarrelling over the choice cuts of a dead buffalo, but terrible smashes with the forepaws that might have splintered a plank, lightning-fast stabs with the fangs, and quick short rips with the claws that lacerated hide wherever they touched. Their first tangle was like an explosion, their movement too quick to follow. Then they drew back, and for the briefest part of a minute held off, snarling fiercely, their eyes never leaving one another. There might have been no human enemy near.

El-Asad pounced again. Black Mane met him half-way, and they rolled over and over, locked in a cruel embrace. Their hind feet were searching for the tender bellies, and it was a wonder that one or the other was not disembowelled. Probably the flailing legs

parried reciprocally. The younger beast went for el-Asad's throat, and they broke apart once more. Both of them were striped and splashed with blood.

Circling, they made ferocious little assaults, not closing until el-Asad, with a full-chested roar, rose to his hind feet, challenging the other to do the same. There they stood, reared up like boxers, el-Asad full eight feet tall and Black Mane not much less, and balancing thus they beat mercilessly at each other's heads with those brawn-corded limbs and steel-tipped paws. I had never seen anything so ragingly fearless before; and do not expect to again.

I feared that the old fellow's years would tell against him. I needn't have worried.

Prime muscles answering a shrewd and vastly experienced brain, and yellow eyes quicker than a fencer's, combined with an utter lack of the nerves that plagued his enemy, gave el-Asad the victory within seconds of their heaving erect.

The climax was incredibly swift and violent. Black Mane had got in a very good swat on his chops that appeared to madden the king. El-Asad's right paw crashed against the younger brute's ear with a jolt that rocked him back and sideways; as Black Mane was falling, dazed and sick, el-Asad's left forefoot, claws fully extended, made an arc and caught him a terrific bang under the jowl.

Never was the old one-two used to better advantage. Black Mane went down like a ton of loose bones.

His punishment administered, the great lion lost all anger; he began to prod Black Mane with his nose, whining at him to rouse himself. Black Mane obviously did not feel lively. He managed to sit up, his hind legs stretched out to one side, his head drooping and wagging tipsily. Several times he made an attempt to get to his feet, but it was two or three minutes before he was able to make it.

The *murran* were shouting like devils. I went down the hillside and walked over to join them. There was something gone from their voices. I realized what it was: the hysterical note of the dedicated lion-killer. There is much sportsmanship in the Masai; they love a good fight. I wondered what the end would be. If Enker declined to slay his lion, it would seem just and proper to all of them at this moment, yet later the name of coward might be hurled at him, when his comrades had forgotten their own emotions on the plain of battle.

By the time I had reached my friend's side, Black Mane had succeeded in standing, and was starting off after the distant lionesses, his chin touching the grass as he went. He looked like a beast who had learned a valuable lesson—the hard way.

El-Asad watched him until he had gone a fair way, and then faced round and looked at us inquiringly.

I thought he would charge, for his brawling blood must be up, but he merely stood there quite silently, running his tongue in and out of the front of his mouth. Then he lifted a bruised paw and licked it.

The warriors glanced at Enker, two or three of them hefting their spears in a half-hearted manner.

Then The Sheep did a magnificent thing, the bravest, daftest act imaginable. Instinctively he did it with great dramatic presence. Lifting his weapons in both hands, he cast them down at his feet, first the spear, then the razor-sharp sword. He didn't say a word. Leaning over, he plucked a handful of grass, a sacred symbol of his race, and holding it in his right hand as the Masai do when making a truce, he walked towards the yellow lion. His face was set in a calm, almost cold, expression, and he walked neither too fast nor too slowly.

I unslung my rifle and pushed a bullet into the chamber. None of the *murran* moved.

Enker approached the animal at his steady pace until no more than fifteen feet separated them. El-Asad stared at him, his big head cocked and his ears pricked forward, for all the world like a puzzled dog.

Enker raised his hand and waved the grass. The lion looked at it. Strung up and keen for battle, he should, I thought, have leaped on the presumptuous creature who faced him so boldly, and torn his throat out. But all he moved was his head. The whole business was uncanny.

" It is peace, chieftain," Enker said in a clear, carrying voice. " You are my first lion, and it is peace between us."

He tossed the grass down before el-Asad, and turned and came back towards us. The warriors began to murmur. Soon they would break into cheers, clustering around to carry The Sheep home in triumph.

The tale of his insane audacity would be told in the village throughout his lifetime and beyond. And, incidentally, both of my own worries would be wiped away as though they had never existed—if el-Asad did not decide to charge. He took two steps forward, lowered his muzzle to sniff at the scattered tuft of grass, then stared at the young man's retreating back.

Great God, I thought, now surely he'll attack. He's been making up his involved feline mind, and now he'll charge. I could not believe in this incredible peace-making. I clung to my doubts until the very moment when Enker rejoined us, when the cheering arose and my friend The Sheep shook himself and blinked and

broke into a sweat, grinning half in shame and half in pride ; while el-Asad wheeled and padded off to catch up with his troop. I slung my rifle again.

Suddenly I wanted a drink of water. My throat was like a tube of alum.

I should have known, I said to myself as we turned towards home.

Goodwill calls to goodwill, and courage shall recognize courage the world over, in fearless man or in the brute creation.

* * *

BETTER HALF

The perfect husband should be rich—and dead.

Author Unknown

Every normal woman believes, and quite accurately, that the average man is very like her husband, John, and she knows very well that John is a weak, silly and knavish fellow, and that any effort to convert him into an archangel overnight is bound to come to grief.

H. L. MENCKEN, *In Defence of Women*

Husbands are things that wives have to get
used to putting up with,
And whom they breakfast with and sup with.
They interfere with the discipline of nurseries,
And forget anniversaries.
And when they have been particularly remiss
They think they can cure everything with
a great big kiss.

OGDEN NASH

The London season is entirely matrimonial ; people are either hunting for husbands or hiding from them.

OSCAR WILDE

A husband should tell his wife everything that he is sure she will find out, and before anyone else does.

LORD DEWAR

The chain of wedlock is so heavy that it takes two to carry it, sometimes three.

ALEXANDRE DUMAS

SLEEPING PRINCESS

"I couldn't help myself," said George St. George, ". . . the fairy story came floodin' back to me"

by NORMAN EDWARDS

THE DUKE OF RUSTINGTON watched George St. George drink his port. And he marvelled: his guest's hand was as steady as the hand of royalty taking a salute. Yet George had done himself proud that evening: four dry martinis—large ones—and at dinner the best part of a bottle of *Chambertin.* And now he was starting on the second decanter of port; and apart from a slowly deepening flush, and a noticeable increase in pomposity, he might easily have been mistaken for a middle-aged gentleman at the height of sobriety.

"You're a marvel, George," exclaimed the duke. "I'm damned if I know how you do it."

"Keep in practice," answered George. "That's the secret. Dine with me tomorrow night? I owe you a dinner."

"Thanks, I'd like to. Can you make it an early dinner?"

"Why?"

"I'm going to the ballet. Care to come?"

A suggestion of a puzzled frown wrinkled the red expanse of George's forehead. "The ballet," he said slowly. "You goin' to the ballet, Harry?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"Not exactly your cup of tea, is it?"

"What do you mean, George?"

"Nothin'; only if you'd had tickets for—well, the *Crazy Gang* . . ."

Rustington shook his head sadly.

"Silly of me," he admitted. "I might have known that you'd prefer Nervo and Knox and Bud Flanagan to Miss Shearer and . . ."

"That's where you're wrong," interrupted George St. George. "In my youth I frequented the ballet—er—religiously."

"No need to be pompous about it," rebuked the duke. "And if you were a balletomane in your youth, why don't you jump at the chance of a free seat and come with me?"

"Because," answered George St. George in a whispery voice, "they're doin' *The Sleeping Princess.*"

The Duke of Rustington stared at his portly friend. That George should know what ballet was being performed the next night was surprising enough, but that he should speak of it in this tone of yearning wistfulness was more amazing still.

The duke felt uncomfortable; he grabbed the decanter and poured wine into his glass with indecent haste.

"Tell me, George," he said, pushing the decanter towards his friend, "why you won't join me because *The Sleeping Princess* is on the bill?"

George stared moodily into his port for a while; but suddenly he looked—for him—candidly at his host. "All right," he said, "I don't mind tellin' you. As a matter of fact, the reason may interest you. But if I do tell you, I don't want any facetious remarks. Understand?"

The Duke of Rustington smiled thinly but charmingly. "My dear fellow, if you find the subject unpleasant . . ."

"Not unpleasant," interrupted George. "No, not unpleasant, but—nostalgic. You see, once upon a time I knew a princess. And when I first met her, she was asleep."

Rustington pushed his chair back from the table, crossed one leg over the other, and half turned in his seat so that he could look George St. George straight in the face. He stared long and intently at the sunset glow on his friend's countenance. At last he nodded. "Go on, George," he said. "A very good opening—if I may say so without being deemed facetious!"

"Irony," commented George, sipping port, "does not suit your style, my dear Harry. Irony should be used with subtlety."

"Get on," snarled the duke. "Get on, man!"

A faint grin flickered over George's lips, and the vast expanse of his starched shirt heaved, supplying a crackling accompaniment: he had touched Rustington on the raw, and he was delighted. But he bowed his head gravely, and said in a courtly voice: "Very well, my dear Harry. But please remember that what I am about to tell you must be regarded as strictly confidential. You see, the princess in my story . . ."

"Came out of the spell when you blundered into the wrong room and frightened the life out of her," cried Rustington in a sudden burst of temper. "Damn you, George, if you're going to tell me *your* version of *The Sleeping Princess*, I'd like to have the ballet music on the gramophone—just to keep me awake."

There was silence in the duke's dining-room for a long and uncomfortable minute. George drank port and stared stonily at a revolting painting of one of his host's ancestors. His face was very red indeed.

It was the duke who broke the silence. He blew his nose; and

from behind the barrage of a very large handkerchief he muttered : " Sorry, George. Carry on."

In a feverish, almost incoherent voice, George continued. " It's some years ago now, Harry, but I was staying in the country with some friends interested in poker, and one night we started playin' after dinner ; we didn't stop until lunch time the next day. I hadn't done so well—in fact I'd lost a packet—and after lunch I went for a walk in a nearby wood to think of some way in which I could settle up. Pass the port, please."

Impatiently, Rustington passed the decanter with a half-circle movement of his right arm. George St. George slowly filled his glass, sipped, and nodded critical approval. " Not bad," he muttered to himself. " Not half bad. I must say, Harry, that your cellar . . . Well, it was a very warm afternoon ; and although I'd had a very good lunch—lobster mayonnaise, and some quite decent champagne—I didn't feel sleepy : too much on my mind, I suppose. Or perhaps it was because my liver was in better shape than it is today."

" Get on, man, get on ! " growled the duke.

" The other chaps toddled off to bed," continued George, " but, as I said, I went for a walk. I must have walked for a couple of miles before I realised I was trespassin'. I'd climbed over a low stone wall into some private wood ; and just as I was about to turn back I came to a clearin' in the trees—a sort of glade, if you follow me. In the middle was a little artificial lake, and near it was a sort of a what-d'you-call-it ?—not a summer house, but one of those charmin' little stone pavilions—like the ones you see in the grounds at Versailles. Anyway, I was curious enough to take a closer look, so I walked up to the place and went inside.

" You know, Harry, after the glare and heat of the sun, it was as dim and cool inside that little pavilion as it is when you enter a cathedral. There was something unreal about the place—something fairy-like. But it was restful—I felt soothed and relaxed. It was as if I'd entered another and more gentle world.

" For a few moments I had to blink my eyes before I could see anythin' clearly, but as I peered about the place I saw somethin' that nearly made me jump out of my skin."

George St. George paused dramatically and sucked softly at his port.

" What did you see, George ? " prompted the duke. " A ghost ? "

" No," said George. " Not a ghost—though at first I thought I was seein' an angel."

" A what ? "

"An angel, Harry. On a couch at the far end of the room was a young woman. She was lyin' on her back and her hair was loose to make a pillow for her lovely head. Her hands were folded over her bosom and at first I thought she was dead; that I'd intruded into a chapel. But then I noticed her breathing—she was asleep."

George St. George broke off and waited with restrained politeness while his host smothered a noisy yawn.

"Sorry, George," apologised the duke, in a nicely calculated tone of insincerity, "carry on, old boy. A young woman, you said? Asleep. Good looking, of course?"

"She was more than that," said George sombrely. "She was beautiful. Absolutely beautiful. The sight of her made me catch my breath . . ."

"All that lobster mayonnaise," muttered the duke. "Did she wake up and scream her head off?"

"She was fast asleep," answered George, glaring at Rustington. "I stood there looking down at her for at least ten minutes,drinkin' in her loveliness."

"Oh, come off it," interrupted the duke in a loud voice. "I'll bet you'd been drinking so much champagne that you didn't stand still for ten minutes looking at a lovely girl without wheezing, or coughing, or . . ."

"Shut up!" cried George St. George. The look in his eyes was so fierce that Rustington quailed.

"Sorry," he mumbled. "Sorry, George."

George drank some more port, and with evident effort calmed down.

"She was divinely beautiful," he went on. "There was something about her face—and her figure—that made me think of magical things . . ."

"Magical things, George?"

"Yes. Like Fairy Queens. I thought of the story of the lovely young girl who'd had a spell put on her by an old witch, and was doomed to stay asleep until a young and handsome prince came to her room and . . ."

"George! You *didn't*?"

"Yes, Harry, I did."

"D'you mean to tell me that you had the nerve to . . ."

"Yes. I did."

George suddenly did a rather delightful thing: he giggled. "I couldn't help myself," he admitted. "The fairy story came floodin' back to me; and I suppose I got carried away."

"Of all the damned conceited things," spluttered the duke. "You—*you* of all people, casting yourself in the rôle of a handsome young prince."

"Oh, I wasn't so bad in those days," protested George St. George. "Much thinner. And I had my own teeth, too."

"Where—where did you kiss her?"

"Only on the cheek," answered George in a hurt voice. "Good Lord, you don't think I'd be such a cad as to kiss a sleeping girl on the lips, do you Harry?"

"Yes. And I'll bet you did!"

George St. George smiled an enigmatic smile. A sort of Mona Lisa look passed momentarily over his florid features. He finished his drink, and remained silent.

"Go on, go on," urged the duke. "I suppose there's more to come?"

George nodded, half closing his eyes as if lost in a maze of delightful reminiscence. "It was a wonderful moment," he said at last, and in such a soft voice that Rustington was almost scared, "such a wonderful moment. Her cheek was like a magnolia petal; so soft, so delicate; and I . . ."

"That'll do," muttered the duke, stirring restlessly in his chair. "Cut out the purple passages, George. Tell me, did she wake up?"

George nodded. "Of course," he said simply. "When I kiss a girl, it's no butterfly kiss. She opened her eyes and stared straight into mine."

"And *then* she screamed, George?"

"On the contrary. She smiled at me."

"Still half asleep, of course. Or the light was bad."

"She had a charmin' smile. It gave her two of the nicest dimples I've ever seen; and the way her nose wrinkled—now don't say anythin' coarse, Harry!—was absolutely fetchin'. 'Oh,' she said, 'who are you?'"

"I bet that stumped you, George!"

"Not at all, Harry. I felt gay, and—well—playful; and whether it was the champagne, or the twinkle in her eyes, or what it was—I don't know: but I played up. I had that feelin' I sometimes have on a race-course: I felt I couldn't go wrong.

"'Princess,' I said, 'the spell is broken. The old witch no longer has power over you.'"

"'Oh,' she breathed. 'Which old witch? I know so many. And are you a prince? You look more like . . .'"

"A book-maker," jeered the duke. "Go on, George. What exactly *did* she say?"

George St. George moved his ponderous bulk. He loomed across the table, staring intently at his friend. "She said," he announced in a clear and vibrant voice, "'you look more like a young god from Mount Olympus!'"

Again there was a long period of silence in the duke's dining-room; but like all periods of silence, it was eventually broken—in this case by harsh, almost hysterical laughter. George waited patiently for the duke to take a grip on himself, and then, calmly, he continued.

"I must remind you, Harry, that in those days I was considerably younger than I am now, so I did not find her remark unusual. I sat down beside her, and told her, quite candidly, what I thought she looked like. And although I say it who shouldn't, it wasn't a bad effort. Anyhow, it made her very wide awake! She sat up and told me not to exaggerate; but I could see by the way she blushed that she wasn't displeased, and that she'd quickly come to the conclusion that I was tellin' the truth. And I was, Harry. No flattery. Just the truth. At times like that it . . . well, it just flows out of me. Beauty, I suppose, has the power to uncork a man. I've seldom been so eloquent."

"You're not doing too badly now," interpolated the duke in a respectful voice. "I suppose years of gossip-writing for a Sunday newspaper must do something to a man."

George St. George wrinkled his forehead. His look reminded his host of a puzzled child. "But, my dear Harry," said George, "beauty always does something to me. It . . . it *awes*, you know."

For the second time that evening the Duke of Rustington felt uncomfortable without knowing why. He looked at his fat friend, and tried to reconcile what he saw with what he had just heard. And he failed. But the essential simplicity of George St. George affected him: he felt—just for a second—abashed. He coughed, drank some port, and coughed again. "Go on, George," he muttered. "It's getting late, and I want to go to bed."

George St. George started up again: "We sat there for—oh, I don't know how long. An hour at least; but I'd lost all sense of time, Harry. You see, I was—er—enchanted. Yes, that's it—enchanted. A fairy story had come true."

George St. George watched with keen interest the solitary tear that trickled slowly and laboriously down the right cheek of his old friend. "Damn you, George," muttered Rustington, "you've made me feel emotional."

"Good for you," said George complacently. "There's not much more to tell," he went on, looked thoughtfully at the decanter. "And I see that there's very little . . . oh, thanks old boy, thanks."

"Please, George," pleaded Rustington, "I *do* want to go to bed. I'm tired."

"That's exactly what she said," remarked George St. George,

" when I asked her why she was sleepin' in that pavilion. ' I'm tired,' she said. ' There was a big ball at the castle last night . . .' "

" Castle, George ? "

George St. George nodded. " Yes," he said. " There was a castle close by. At least, I suppose you'd call it a castle. It had been rebuilt and modernised by a very rich cove from Chicago—I've forgotten his name—and it must have cost a packet to run, even in the late 'thirties. The Government has it now. Uses it for storin' wigs and false teeth—so I'm told. Anyway, as I was sayin' when you interrupted, she'd been dancin' all night, and when the ball was over she'd slipped into the grounds for a breath of fresh air. And she'd found the pavilion so restful and cool, she told me, that she'd gone off to sleep."

" Until you butted in," muttered the duke.

" She was delighted," said George St. George, a crisp note in his fruity voice. " She wasn't very happy, you see, and she wanted to forget her troubles. Just for a little while. She was comin' to the end of her stay in England. She had to go back to her own country—and get married."

" Ah, so that was what was making her unhappy ? "

" Yes. She had promised her father to marry a chap with a mint of money—father was very hard up—but she didn't love him. He was too long in the tooth. About ninety ; or so I gathered."

" Don't exaggerate, George. And tell me—this sleeping beauty of yours : was she a *real* princess ? "

" Yes," answered George, " a very real princess."

" Who was she, George ? "

" Never mention a lady's name in the mess, Harry. That's one thing I *did* learn when I was in the Guards."

" You're in my dining-room," said Rustington acidly. " Not in the mess."

" Sorry," mumbled George St. George. " But the principle holds good just the same ; though I must say your port is better than the port I got in the mess."

Rustington sighed. In a fatigued way he sent the decanter on a familiar journey. " Well, go on," he grumbled. " Tell me what you talked about."

" Oh, this and that," answered George vaguely. " We didn't do much talkin'."

George St. George gave his old friend a quick glance and then lowered his gaze smiling shyly. And Rustington saw to his horror that a baby blush was being born in George's rubicund cheeks. But in spite of the competition, the blush thrived until a ruby glow suffused George's expansive face.

The duke edged his chair to the table and craned closer to George. "You didn't do much talkin', eh? That's not like you, George. Invariably, you talk a great deal—a great deal too much, George."

George lowered his eyes in obvious discomfiture.

"There was no need to chatter," he muttered. "She was tired, and unhappy, and in need of—er—comfortin'."

"Comforting, George. What sort of comforting?"

"Just comforting," answered George softly. "And after we'd had a swim . . ."

"A what?"

"Swim."

"In . . . in that pool, or lake, or whatever it was?"

"Yes."

"But you didn't know you were going to swim when you started off on your walk that afternoon?"

"No."

"Did she?"

"No."

"And you mean to tell me that you and . . . and this princess went bathing . . ."

"Yes, Harry."

The Duke of Rustington sat back so suddenly in his chair that he nearly toppled over.

"It was very hot that afternoon," George said quietly. "We both thought a dip in the pool would do us good."

"Did it?"

George St. George drank port and stared intently at the portrait of the duke's ancestor. "You know," he said suddenly, and in a loud voice, "I've never liked that portrait, Harry . . ."

"Never mind the portrait," said the duke. "Answer my question."

George St. George shrugged his heavy shoulders and got to his feet. "It's gettin' late," he said. "I must be gettin' home to bed." He sighed. "Some women have it, Harry," he mused. "Perhaps it's a gift."

"What is?"

"Enchantment. She had it."

"What happened to her?"

"Oh, the war ruined her father. He's dead now. So's the husband."

"So she married the rich old gentleman?"

"Yes. But he didn't leave a bean. Inflation, and all that. She was left practically penniless."

"Sorry to hear that, George."

The two friends were silent as they walked to the front door.

George struggled into a light overcoat. Rustington opened the door and looked out.

"Lovely night, George."

"Yes. Lovely woman, too. Still is."

"Oh, so you have seen her again since your—lucky dip?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

George St. George told him. "But we haven't met again, Harry. I wouldn't want her to see me—as I am nowadays."

The Duke of Rustington put out a hand and tapped George St. George gently on the chest. "But . . . . but what is she doing *there*, George?" he asked in surprise.

"She's still a lovely woman, Harry, with a lovely, lovely figure. And she's a lovely dancer. I think you will enjoy *The Sleeping Princess* when you see her in the ballet tomorrow night. Good night, Harry. Sleep well."

And George St. George walked slowly home to bed.

* * *

SAFETY CATCH

Smith and Jones, two crack shots, were hotly jealous of each other's prowess. Setting out one day after deer, they separated in the woods, taking opposite sides of a ridge.

Almost immediately, Jones heard Smith's rifle fire off. He ran over to the spot, but there was no deer carcass in sight. However, a startléd calf was crashing off through the undergrowth.

"Oh lord!" cried Jones delightedly. "You didn't shoot that *calf*?"

"Suppose I did?" growled Smith.

"Why did you do a thing like that?"

"Took it for a deer."

"Doesn't look as if you hit it."

"No—missed."

"How in the world did that happen?"

"Wasn't quite sure it wasn't a calf."

"*That*," said Jones scornfully, "is what I call a pretty poor hunter—to shoot at a calf for a deer and miss it at that!"

"Don't be a fool," drawled Smith, "I shot at it just so as to hit it if it was a deer, and miss it if it was a calf."

MAGIC CIRCLE

Let not the conceit of intellect hinder thee from worshipping mystery

MARTIN TUPPER

Agnis Tompson confessed, that at the time when his Majesty was in Denmark, she . . . took a Cat and christened it, and afterwards bound to each part of that Cat the chiefest parts of a dead man, and several joints of his body; and that in the night following, the said Cat was conveyed into the midst of the Sea by all these Witches sailing in their Riddles or Cieves, as is aforesaid, and so left the said Cat right before the Town of Leith in Scotland: this done, there did arise such a Tempest in the Sea as a greater hath not been seen: which Tempest was the cause of the perishing of a boat or vessel . . . wherein were sundry Jewels and rich gifts which should have been presented to the now Queen of Scotland, at her Majesty's coming to Leith.

Again it is confessed that the said christened Cat was the cause that the King's Majesty's Ship, at his coming forth of Denmark, had a contrary wind to the rest of his Ships then being in his company: which thing was most strange and true . . .

The Damnable Life and Death of Dr. Fian, 1591

Fraught With Spite

Yes: I have brought, to helpe your vows,
Hornèd poppie, cypresse boughes,
The fig-tree wild, that grows on tombes,
And juice that from the larch-tree comes,
The basiliske's bloud, and the viper's skin;
And now our orgies let's begin.

BEN JONSON

Horible!

Yf . . . a serpent be burned and the ashes of it put in ye fyre, anone shall there be a raine bowe with an horible thunder.

The Boke of the Secrets of Albertus Magnus

Pursuit

The light of the hid moon streaks all the sky
with ominous panther bars,
the marshes lie
in taut and quivering silence,
the lagoons
lip through their grasses searching for lost moons.
Like evil berries the green fire-flies light
on the long rushes.

Through the dim-lit night
a round red lantern flees,
jerking and blind,
from the red lantern following close behind.

ELIZABETH COATSWORTH

Visitation

There was Joe, who in his unregenerate days was mad on card-playing, and would go on, Sunday or workday, gambling . . . One night somebody pointed out that the clock was striking twelve and it was into Sunday. "Gang on," said Joe; "aye, the Divvle hissel' wain't stop me." And then there was a whirlwind outside, a fuff of soot down the chimney, and a big black hand all blazing with blue fire came down.

Every card in the hands of Joe and his mates stood stiff and then moved into the middle of the table; they couldn't grip or stop them. And in the middle of the table the cards all came together, and a great black thumb turned each one over, and marked it with a black print. Then another roar of thunder, a blaze of lightning, and the four men were left sitting in front of a pack of cards every one of which was shrivelled on edge and thumb-marked in the corner. No wonder Joe took the Devil's pictures by aid of the tongs, and dumped them into the fire. I guess you would have done the same.

WILLIAM T. PALMER, *The Verge of Western Lakeland*

Four Witches Come to Town . . .

Three times round with kisses seven,
Warped and woven there spun we
Arms and legs and flaming hair,
Like a whirlwind on the sea . . .

WILLIAM BELL SCOTT

Corn in the Cob!

I've heard my feather say, that when he lived over the hill, there was a carter that worked on the farm along wid him, and no one couldn't think how t'was that this here man's horses looked so much better than what any one else's did. I've heard my feather say that they was that fat that they couldn't scarcely get about; and this here carter he was as much puzzled as what the rest was, so cardinley he laid hisself up in the staable one night, to see if he could find the meaning an't.

And he hadn't been there very long, before these here liddle farisees they crep in at the sink hole; in they crep, one after another; liddle tiny bits of chaps they was, and each an 'em had a liddle sack of corn on his back as much as ever he could carry. Well! in they crep, on they gets, up they clims, and there they was, just as busy feeding these here horses; and prensley one says to t'other, he says, "Puck," says he, "I twets, do you twet?". And thereupon, this here carter he jumps up and says, "Dannel ye," he says, "I'll make ye twet afore I've done wud ye!" But afore he could get anigh 'em they was all gone, every one an 'em.

And I've heard my feather say, that from that day forard this here carter's horses fell away, till they got that thin and poor that he couldn't bear to be seen along wid 'em, so he took and went away, for he couldn't abear to see hisself no longer and nobody ain't seen him since.

Sussex countryman, quoted by W. D. PARISH,
in *A Dictionary of the Sussex Dialect*

Sops-in-Wine

And can the physician make sick men well?
And can the magician a fortune divine?
Without lily, germander, and-sops-in-wine,
With sweet-briar
And bon-fire
And strawberry wire,
And columbine.

Within and out, in and out, round as a ball,
With hither and thither, as straight as a line,
With lily, germander, and sops-in-wine,
With sweet-briar
And bon-fire
And strawberry wire
And columbine . . .

Author Unknown, Sixteenth Century

★*Does she go to lunch on a broomstick? Starting a new stage in his career as medical student, the author sets foot in the wards and encounters . . .*

SISTER VIRTUE

by RICHARD GORDON

WHEN I heard I had passed the anatomy examination I felt like a man who had received an unexpected legacy. I had cut down my work preparing for the test by refusing to study at all topics that had been asked in the past few papers, in the belief that examiners, like lightning, never strike twice in the same place. I managed to scrape into the pass list in company with Tony Benskin and Evans. Grimsdyke also succeeded, and confessed himself amazed.

I was elated: now I was released from the dull tyranny of the study of the dead in the dissecting room to the investigation of the dying in the hospital wards. I could start to perform like a real doctor; I could buy myself a stethoscope.

I strolled into a surgical instrument-maker's in Devonshire Street to select one, like a boy buying his first pipe. With the grave and critical air of a consultant cardiologist, I chose an impressive instrument with thick rubber tubes, a chest-piece as big as a jam-pot cover, and a few gadgets I could twiddle while delivering my professional opinions.

The choice was an important one, because in hospital a stethoscope is as indisputable a sign of seniority as long trousers in a prep. school. It was not thought good taste to exhibit the instrument too blatantly, but a discreet length of tubing poking out of the coat, like a well-set pocket handkerchief, explained to your colleagues you had quitted the anatomy rooms for ever. With a bit of luck you might even be taken by the public for a real doctor.

To the layman the stethoscope is the doctor's magic wand; if he sees a man with one round his neck he assumes he is a physician as readily as he takes a fellow in a clerical collar for a parson. These are a pair of conditioned reflexes that have from time to time been used for extracting small sums of money from well-meaning citizens by sufficiently respectable-looking confidence tricksters.

The next morning I walked proudly through the gates of St. Swithin's itself instead of going into the narrow door of the medical school. My first call was the students' lobby, to find which consultant I was appointed to.

Teaching of the clinical subjects—medicine, surgery, gynæcology, and midwifery—is carried on by a watered-down continuation of the old apprenticeship system. The year is divided into three-monthly terms, each of which the student spends attached to a different consultant. The doctor is the Chief, who usually takes on six or seven pupils known collectively as his " firm," and dignified in the physicians' wards with the title of medical clerks.

Each of the clerks is given four or five beds to look after. He is obliged to examine the patients admitted to them, write notes, and scrape up an account of the case on the consultant's weekly visit.

Teaching is done at the bedside by the Chief himself, his junior consultant, the registrar, or the houseman, and the students are expected to educate themselves in the intervals by nosing round the ward for instructive signs and symptoms and doing the unending medical odd jobs.

I began clinical work on a medical firm under the instruction of Dr. Malcolm Maxworth, M.D., F.R.C.P. Dr. Maxworth was one of the hospital's oldest physicians and had charge of male and female wards—Patience and Virtue.

As he appeared only once a week the new students had to start by attending a small class given by the houseman on examination of the patient. We had at the time no more idea of the correct method for this than for water-divining, and a Boy Scout with a first-aid certificate would have been more use in the wards than any of us.

The wards of St. Swithin's, which were contained in two large red-brick blocks, were dull, hostile galleries made up of a succession of irritating corners in which the nurses' dusters flapped for ever in defiance. They were repeatedly being redecorated in an attempt to give them an air of modernity and cheerfulness, but the original design of the corridor-like rooms made fresh paint as ineffective as make-up on a crone.

There was always a plan on foot to pull them down and rebuild, but the execution of this seemed to meet with baffling postponements. Meanwhile the staff took pride that they trod the same boards in the exercise of their art as their professional forbears, and the nurses spent a great deal of time they should have given to the patients sweeping the floors.

I walked across the court and up the dark stone stairs to Virtue ward. Tony Benskin, Grimsdyke, and Evans were already standing outside the heavy glass doors, dangling their stethoscopes and trying not to appear a little in awe of their surroundings, like Oxford freshmen or new prisoners at Dartmoor. We greeted each other in low, church tones.

The houseman came jumping down the stairs three at a time. We stiffened ourselves, like sentries coming to attention. He shot straight past and through the ward door, without appearing to notice us. A moment later his head popped out again.

"Are you relatives waiting to see someone?" he asked. He caught sight of our proud stethoscopes. "Oh, you're the new clerks, I suppose. Damn it! I'm far too busy to show you anything."

He scratched his curly head. He was a pleasant-looking fellow, about three years older than ourselves.

"Look," he went on cheerfully. "Get a sheet of instructions from Sister Virtue and see how you get on examining a few patients. I've got a lumbar puncture and a couple of aspirations to do, but I'll give you a hand when I can."

He disappeared again. The small glow of self-importance over our promotion was dimmed. Glancing nervously at one another we went through the doors into the ward.

The houseman had already disappeared behind some screens round a bed at the far end. One or two nurses were busy attending to the patients. The four of us stood by the door for ten minutes. No one took the slightest notice.

From a small door on one side of the ward the Sister appeared. She immediately bore down on our quartet.

"Get out!" she hissed savagely.

I had never seen a sister close to before. This unexpected proximity had the effect of being in a rowing-boat under the bows of the *Queen Mary*.

Sister Virtue was a fine body of a woman. She was about six feet tall, her figure was as burly as a policeman's, and she advanced on her adversaries with two belligerent breasts. Even her broad bottom as she passed looked as formidable as the stern of a battleship.

Her dress was speckless blue and her apron as crisp as a piece of paper. She had a face like the side of a quarry and wore a fine grey moustache.

My immediate impulse was to turn and run screaming down the stairs. Indeed, all of us jumped back anxiously, as if afraid she might bite. But we stood our ground.

"We're the new clerks," I mumbled in a dry voice.

She looked at us as if we were four unpleasant objects some patient had just brought up.

"I won't have any nonsense here," she said abruptly. "None at all."

We nodded our heads briskly, indicating that nonsense of any sort was not contemplated.

"You're not to come in the ward after twelve o'clock, in the afternoons, or after six in the evening. Understand?"

Her eyes cauterized each of us in turn.

"And you're not to interfere with the nurses."

Grimsdyke raised an eyebrow.

"Don't be cheeky!" she snapped.

She turned quickly to her desk and came back with some foolscap sheets of typewritten notes.

"Take these," she commanded.

We selected a sheet each. They were headed "Instructions on Case-Taking for Students."

"You may look at patients number five, eight, twelve, and twenty," Sister Virtue went on sternly. "You will replace the bedclothes neatly. You will always ask the staff nurse for a chaperon before examining any female patient below the head and neck.

Kindly remember that I do not like students in my ward at all, but we are forced to put up with you."

Her welcome finished, she spun round and sailed off to give a probationer hell for not dusting the window ledges the correct way.

We silently crept through the doors and leant against the wall of the corridor outside to read the instruction papers. Grimsdyke was the only one to speak.

"I wonder if she goes to lunch on a broomstick?" he said.

I turned my thoughts to the typewritten paper. "A careful history must be taken before the patient is examined," I read. There followed a list of things to ask. It started off easily enough—"Name. Address. Age. Marital state. Occupation. For how long? Does he like it?" It continued with a detailed interrogation on the efficiency with which the patient performed every noticeable physiological function.

I turned the page over. The other side was headed "Examination." I read half-way down, but I was burning to try my luck on a real patient. I stuffed the paper in my pocket, like a child tossing aside the instructions for working a new complicated toy. I carefully put my nose inside the door and was relieved to find Sister had returned to her lair. I thought she was probably digesting someone.

Timidly I walked down the rows of beds to patient number twelve.

"Look where you're going!" a female voice said angrily in my ear.

I spun round. Behind me was a cross-looking nurse. She was young and not bad-looking, and she wore the bows and blue belt of a qualified staff-nurse.

"Can't you see that floor has just been polished?" she demanded.

"I'm sorry," I mumbled. She tossed her head and stalked off with a swish of starched apron.

Number twelve was a stout young blonde browning at the roots —a frequent condition in female wards. She was sitting up in bed in a green woollen jacket reading a book by Peter Cheyney.

"Good morning," I said humbly, expecting that she, too, would attack me.

She immediately slipped a piece of paper in her book, set it down on her bedside locker, threw off her bed-jacket, and dropped the top of her night-dress off her shoulders to reveal a large and not unpleasant bosom. Then she smiled.

"Good morning," she said. She was obviously used to the routine.

I felt a little at a loss. I had never been in such circumstances before, anywhere.

"Er—do you mind if I examine you?" I asked diffidently.

"Go ahead," she said invitingly, giving me a bigger smile.

"Thanks awfully."

The experience was so unusual I couldn't think of anything to say. I groped for remembrance of the instructions, but the sheets in my mind's eye were as blank as the patient's counterpane. I felt like an after-dinner speaker who had risen to his feet and found he'd forgotten his notes.

Then an idea rescued me unexpectedly—I would take her pulse. Seizing one wrist, I felt for the throbbing radial artery while I gazed with unseeing concentration at the face of my wrist-watch. I felt I had held her arm for five minutes or more, wondering what to do next.

A thought exploded in my mind.

"I must fetch a nurse!" I exclaimed. I dropped her wrist as if she had smallpox. "A chaperon, you know."

She giggled.

"Oh, go on with you!" she said playfully.

I backed away quickly. A nurse undecorated with belt or bows was dusting a locker on the other side of the ward. She looked hearteningly junior.

"I wonder if you would kindly chaperon me with a patient for a few minutes?" I asked urgently.

"No!" she said. She paused in her dusting to glance at me. I must have looked so miserable that a little pity glowed in her heart. "Ask the junior probationer," she suggested brusquely. "It's her job. She's in the sluice-room cleaning the bedpans."

I thanked her humbly and went to look for my help-meet. She

was a worried-looking girl of about eighteen who was busy polishing a pile of metal bedpans as if they were the family silver.

" Will you please be my chaperon ? " I asked meekly.

She pushed a lock of straw-coloured hair out of her eyes wearily.

" I suppose so," she said. " If I have to."

We went back into the ward together and gathered some screens round the stout blonde's bed. The probationer stood opposite me with a look of contempt on her face for my inexpert manipulations while I examined the blonde's tongue, her eyes, and her teeth. I stuck my stethoscope warily here and there on her chest, though the noises were as uninformative to my ears as the sound of the sea on a distant shore.

Taking the earpieces out I said, " Good ! " as if I had completed my diagnosis.

" Aren't you going to examine my tummy ? " asked the blonde with disappointment. " All the doctors examine my tummy. It's my tummy what's wrong."

" Tomorrow," I said firmly. " I have to go and operate."

How could I tell her in front of the nurse I had not yet learned as far as the tummy ?

★ ***" The impact of surgery on the student is likely to be more—dramatic—than the first gentle touch of medicine." This kindly warning prefaces Richard Gordon's adventures as dresser to the Senior Surgeon of the Hospital. In next month's episode from " Doctor in the House," the new dresser shares the surgical honours with Sir Lancelot Spratt—and with the astounded reader !***

* * *

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Did you ever hear, Madam, that Mrs. Herbert, the Bedchamber Woman, going in a hackney-chair, the chairmen were excessively drunk, and after tossing and jolting her for some minutes, set the chair down; and the foreman lifting up the top, said :

" Madam, you are so drunk, that if you do not sit still, it will be impossible to carry you " ?

HORACE WALPOLE
Letter to the Countess of Upper Ossory, September, 1787

★*My first ghost . . . the Poet Laureate describes a small boy's adventure in "the little-known world of moonlight." This boyhood escapade reveals stirrings of that imaginative power which in full maturity fashioned the genius of John Masefield as poet and story-teller. The incident is taken from the Poet Laureate's autobiography, "So Long to Learn."*

FULL MOON

by JOHN MASEFIELD

MANY mock at superstitions. Life usually shows us all, sooner or later, that there are strangenesses not easily explained. Sometimes, in reading of a custom or legend, I have wondered if we have not something that was here before the Romans, before the beaker people. In a little land like England almost every place is marked by man, stamped with the evidence of life, and therefore suggesting something to the imagination. If you go from England to some wild land, hardly touched by man, never lived-in, not cleared, unmarked, you will find the difference to be profound; you will feel the rawness, the ignorance of the place; Nature there has no memory.

My own encounter with what I took to be a ghost came while I was still a very little boy. It gave me an appalling moment, for it appeared when I was breaking rules and could expect no mercy from spiritual powers.

I was out after dark on a wild autumn evening of full moon; this broke one rule. I was wearing my house slippers out of doors; this broke another rule. I had naturally not told anybody of my going; this broke another rule. The object of my going seems absurd enough; it was, in the main, to drink at a woodland spring, and any such drinking, even in daylight, broke another rule. However, the thought of the forbidden water, the pleasure of breaking all these rules, and (with luck) not being caught, made me creep out, into the little-known world of moonlight.

All went well at first; I had the usual sinner's luck; reached the road unobserved and ran along it. When I came to the entrance to the wood, I was not quite so happy; it looked pretty grim in there, with the wild wind of the gale rousing all sorts of noises in the trees, and the moonlight shadows all changing. However, it was not far to the beech-tree, and the cart-track was easy to follow. I was

soon at the spring, drinking from my cupped hand. The spring trembled up in a charming little hollow, beneath a beautiful great beech-tree near the wood's western edge. It was a favourite haunt of mine; indeed springs are lovely places; men have done well to reverence them. Having drunk, I turned for home; and then my troubles began.

So far, the wind had been in the main behind me; now I felt its force; and felt, too, the terror of the place where no one would be at that time, save poachers, looking for game, or keepers looking for poachers. But ghosts might be there. All sorts of ghosts of which I knew nothing might be walking the night there; and they would know only too well that I was a wicked little boy, such as they dealt with in ways not to be thought of . . . And at that instant, an appalling ghost rushed out at me from a tossing hazel, clutched out at me, almost got me, put the fear of death into me, in an instant of awful terror; then was hurled away from me by the gale, so that I could see what it was.

During the high wind that day some boys must have been flying a big kite. It had broken loose, and been blown about. Its ruins, with its tail of paper tokens, had lodged in a hazel-tree. It was this horrible shapeless whiteness that had blown almost into my face, and had then been plucked away. Full of blessed relief, I fled home, got in unobserved, the sinner's luck most happily holding, and so to bed. I cleaned my shoes early next morning; and no questions were asked.

* * *

FAST WORK

Two magistrates, arrested for speeding, found the court empty when they arrived, so they decided to appear before each other.

The first magistrate mounted the Bench, rapped and said, "First case!"

"You are charged with exceeding the speed limit," he said to the other magistrate. "How do you plead?"

"Guilty," said the other magistrate.

"You are fined two pounds. Step down. Next case."

They then exchanged places, and the second defendant also pleaded guilty to the charge.

"Hmmm," said the magistrate on the Bench. "This is the second case of this kind we've had this morning, they're becoming far too numerous. Four pounds or seven days in gaol."

ROMANCE ON THURSDAY

It promised delightful adventure — to change a young girl into a woman of experience

by SYLVIA THOMPSON

DURING the two years that Gabrielle de Bercy had spent at the Convent in England, she had crossed the Channel for holidays at home often enough to know that she was a bad sailor.

Sitting on her luggage at the end of the deck, her nostalgia for the tranquil terms that were now over became mixed with the first giddy sensations of the crossing, the feeling of malaise adding an intensity to her last impressions of school in the early beauty of the morning; the massive walls and arches of the Convent, the copper beech, the dew-glistening lawns, her friends waving, the dear faces of the nuns—Mother Francesca's fierce serenity—little Sister Margaret Mary's round dimpling face, suddenly tearful.

Harbour and cliffs receded; the choppy, dark blue water widened the distance between herself and England. Long-legged in her Convent skirt and blazer, brown thick stockings and English low-heeled shoes, she had already an elegance in the gestures of her unmanicured hands, something well-brought-up in the poise of her head, a nascent sophistication in her manner that made several passengers glance at her with interest.

Sitting on her valises, labelled in little Sister Margaret Mary's copperplate hand—*Mademoiselle Gabrielle de Bercy*, 10, *Quai Beaugency*, *Paris*, she thought a little dizzily of the life before her, in a world referred to by her parents as *tout Paris*.

The boat dipped, rose and lurched again. She shut her eyes. The next minute she felt an arm support her. A young man's arm.

"Keep your eyes shut, and put your head on my shoulder," he said.

He spoke in English, with a French accent. Dark eyes, a smile . . . That was all she knew. And cared less. But obeyed the voice, accepted the shoulder.

At Calais he looked after her luggage, piloted her through customs and passport office and escorted her to the train.

But it was only when she was settled in her seat and he was opposite her, that she began to take in his appearance, his manner, and then an expression of amusement on his thin, vivid face, as he said :

" Now we can become friends ? "

Of the two views of men that she'd so far been offered—her mother's ironical " mistrust *all* men," proffered as casually as a cigarette, a cocktail, a *petit four ;* and Sister Francesca's view that the *bon Dieu* was the best chaperon—Gabrielle now chose the second. So she smiled back at this shabby, long-limbed young man, whose face was less familiar to her than his shoulder, and who spoke to her with a charming gentleness of manner, as if she'd been a little girl.

" It wouldn't make you feel ill again, if I smoke ? "

She shook her head.

" Of course not—"

" You don't smoke, Mademoiselle ? " He spoke French now.

" No . . ."

The other occupants of the carriage, a couple of Englishwomen in tweeds, were smoking already, and reading novels. A bulky Frenchwoman talked rapidly to her husband who listened inattentively.

Did she live in Paris, the young man asked. She told him that she had left her English school and was now on her way home. His interest did not make her feel shy, as did the so polite yet often half-teasing manner of the men who came to her parents' apartment.

Had she been happy at her Convent ?

She described her time there with vivid affection. Was she glad to be going home ?

" Yes, and no," she said.

Her mother entertained a great deal, which meant one had very little . . . quiet. And she was anxious to study. Sister Francesca had encouraged her desire to study kindergarten methods, and then, if her mother permitted it, to work among small children.

They passed through Abbeville.

" I saw the Germans come into Abbeville eight years ago," he remarked, staring out for several seconds. Then, " Will your mother permit it ? "

She answered that she was afraid Maman would think it a waste of time, since what she wanted was that she should make a good marriage.

" You see, since the war, practical affairs have made Papa anxious . . . And Maman is accustomed to luxury . . ."

If there was the slightest betrayal of disapproval or resentment in her voice, it was unintentional. Hadn't Sister Francesca

said, " Who are you to judge your mother, Gabrielle ? She can only live by *her* comprehension of what is best . . ."

" Anyway . . . We're half-way to Paris, Monsieur, and you haven't told me what *your* job is ? "

He lit another cigarette. The match flame lit his dark eyes and the faintly discoloured eyelids of a young face thinned by fatigue, or by too swiftly accumulated experience.

" Guess ! " He smiled, and flicked his blown-out match on the floor. His dark gaze was on her, charmed and anxious as he repeated, lightly, " *Guess* my job ! "

" Not *commerce*, anyway ! " Brought up in a milieu of industrial magnates and successful politicians, she knew the look of prosperity.

He began to laugh. " Do I look *so* poor ? "

" You aren't exactly rich looking ! " Her tawny, lovely eyes, pure-lidded, serene-browed, examined his old grey flannels, his old navy blue turtle-necked sweater, his cracked sports shoes, and then, in the rack above him, his rolled up, oil-stained mackintosh.

" Yes," she said with a sudden admiring tenderness, " you *do !* " And then, after a moment, she leaned towards him to add, her voice lowered on account of the other occupants of the carriage, " You know—I think that's partly why I find you so *sympathique !* "

He teased, " The good nuns taught you to admire poverty ? "

" Of course," she admitted simply. " Although," she added, " I didn't need their teaching—" and her thoughtful voice revealed an intrinsic, inborn quality of wisdom in her.

" And what do you guess I do ? "

" A doctor—perhaps ? "

He shook his head. " I was a medical student ! But the war and three years in Germany stole my years of study,"

" A journalist ? Or teacher ? " She searched her experience of her father's humbler friends. "A man in a Bank ? A solicitor ? "

She watched his face, trying to interpret the different little glimmers of expression that crossed its spare, vivid features.

He broke in, " The truth is, Mademoiselle, my work is what the English call ' casual.' I do what I can . . . However," he interrupted himself, " that is without importance. What matters to me is your name and address—which I shall copy, if you permit me, from the label on that valise in the rack above you ! For we're already at Chantilly—"

" Then you must give me *your* address," she said.

He gave her a look whose quality of quick wonder she didn't take in ; then took a piece of paper out of his pocket-book and wrote *Pierre Choisy*, 6, *Rue Martinet*." " It's near the Butte de Montmartre."

He went on talking until the train slowed into the shadows of

the Gare du Nord, then he got up quickly and, explaining his regret that he wouldn't be able to stay to help her with her luggage —" an appointment with some friends "—he took his case, murmured, " *Au revoir, Mademoiselle,*" and pushed his way out of the carriage and along the crowded corridor before the train had come to a standstill.

And Gabrielle, vaguely disconcerted, was distracted by the almost instant recognition of her mother, in a white hat, waiting for her.

As they drove home in the car along the Quais of the Seine, Gabrielle was conscious that her mother looked at her several times. Once she said, " You have improved in appearance, *chérie,*" with evident pleasure.

And now she was saying, " You will be able to wear your little pink dress from Lanvin this evening. Angèle has it ready ironed for you. It's one of my Thursday little dinners tonight. It will be very nice to have you to help me . . . Various new people you haven't met—an interesting young Roman poet, an American *diseuse*—and Carlos d'Alvarez, too. He has just finished his portrait of your father . . ." She was looking in her hand mirror, examining her face through her veiling.

" And how is Papa ? " Gabrielle asked. She knew no more of her parents' relationship than that it lacked warmth.

" He is tired ! Affairs make him anxious. He was in Zürich last week. He'll have to go to New York soon." She added, " D'Alvarez' portrait of him is excellent, you know. He is one of the rare painters known as ' great ' who isn't insupportably mediocre ! And now he is anxious to paint you. He has offered to do it as a ' little present ' for me. It seems your ' type ' interested him, when he saw you at our little cocktail party on New Year's Eve . . . Do you remember him ? "

" Yes."

Gabrielle remembered his dark beard and plump sallow cheeks ; and his black eyes and brows above which the heavy forehead rose to a domed baldness. He'd come across the room and spoken to her, asking her questions about herself. She remembered vaguely a sensation of dislike. Yet it wasn't altogether dislike.

If Carlos d'Alvarez had stayed in his Castilian village to paint, to drink seldom and deep, to have his house kept, and his food richly cooked and roughly served by some countrywoman (who'd have borne him a child or two, and got bulky and grey-haired without his troubling to replace her) : if his destiny had left him (as it had bred him) a peasant with genius, there would have been

his pictures, colour-rifted and alive with his passion for that swimming intensity of life that his brush conjured to any surface, of arid hillside, or of a woman's cheek, or of sun-hot flowers. Certainly he, d'Alvarez, would have been simpler in his sins, and his language would have remained terse and blasphemous instead of becoming lisping, insidious, or coarsely epigrammatic, as it became during the cumulative success of his Paris years.

Compared with the young d'Alvarez of the 1910-1920 period (spare and stocky, harshly mistrustful, sensual), the later d'Alvarez of the famous portraits (of the Duchesse de Laön, the Countess Raczynska, the American actress Corinne Hale, the Princesse Oradour) was characterized by a fatty degeneration that had attacked his character and his appearance. By 1930 he was already the creamy-cheeked, bald, jewel-eyed, twice divorced Spanish portrait painter, who had ceased to hunt women because they hunted him; had ceased to mistrust because he'd grown shrewd, and instead of indulging in the routine cruelties and hatreds inherent in his breeding, had learned a smooth toleration, and lost even his rapacity because of the easy silting-in of money. The only bit of him that remained osseous was his talent, and that stood out like the frontal bones in his plump face.

When Carlos d'Alvarez walked into Madame de Bercy's salon the evening after Gabrielle's return, he kissed Madame de Bercy's hand, murmured in his honey-thick French " *Toujours si belle . . .*" and went in turn to three other women. He kissed their hands and moved on, his left thumb holding the silk lapel of his dinner jacket, and an expression of mingled courtliness and vanity in his black velvet eyes, which changed now and then to little shrewd glances at anyone who quickened his interest.

" Good evening, Mademoiselle ! "

Gabrielle turned round. D'Alvarez bowed. His velvet stare remained intent, his regular white teeth showed, as he smiled.

" That is the dress I liked so much before. It is a dress I should like to paint you in . . ."

" It is extremely kind of you."

" So—I must study my model—before beginning !—I always do that. Already, last year, your appearance interested me very much. The varying gold and obscurities of your hair, as well as its line. Also, together with an effect of—may I say it ?—purity, there is also a quality that is . . ." He smiled, lifting his upper lip. " It is the mixture that I shall bring out ! Ah, but there is your Maman, who signs to me to come and sit by that hideous Mme. de Verzelay. In any case, I will arrange it with Madame your mother. How beautiful she looks this evening ! " he added, in a louder voice, as he moved away.

D'Alvarez didn't speak to Gabrielle for the rest of the evening. She was partly relieved, but partly perplexed. Then just before he went he came up to her and said, " You have no doubt heard of this new play, *Picnique ?* It is a great success. I have arranged with your mother that I will take you to it, next Friday. We will dine somewhere. *Hein !* "

" Thank you, Monsieur d'Alvarez . . ."

Now that Gabrielle was no longer a schoolgirl home " for the holidays," she was increasingly filled with a sense that her life, as her parents lived it, was quite—almost relentlessly—detached from what she thought of as the condition of the world.

The agreeable, amusingly organized summer days followed one upon another ; invitations were telephoned, the chef interviewed, clothes ordered. One visited the latest exhibition of pictures, went to a film, to plays, the reception of Madame X., the salon of Miss Y., the American, to dinners, lunches, little dances that cost large sums of money.

The rooms of the de Bercy apartment overlooking the river were filled with summer light ; the lime trees on the Quai outside flamed pale green, and a green translucence shone up into the panelled painted pallor of the rooms ; light, refracted from the Seine, plumed and marbled the high ceilings.

Each morning Angèle came in with her coffee. The same Italian patterned thick earthenware, the same excellent coffee, the same filet lace-edged tray-cloths as there had always been, ever since Gabrielle had stopped having her little girl breakfast of chocolate with " Miss " in the little schoolroom overlooking the courtyard. Angèle, as ever, sad-glancing, wry-lipped, big-boned, her white morning overall over the same old black blouse and skirt, her feet massive in gentian blue *espadrilles*. When Gabrielle had been out, to Mass, she would bring a third *croissant*.

Once she remarked, a ripple of tenderness crossing her El-Greco face, " Mademoiselle Gabrielle will soon lose her habits learned from the Good Sisters ! " Angèle had always been with worldly people, respecting their riches and observing their selfishness.

One morning there was a letter on Gabrielle's tray. A note signed " Pierre Choisy " saying, " When will you come to see me, as you promised ? "

She had forgotten him. But now she remembered his thin, interesting face, and their journey last week.

And as she went upward through the narrow, shabby streets of Montmartre she thought it symbolical that he should live his unpretentious existence pitched so high, and clear, and far-seeing over Paris, while her own life, in her parents' world, spread itself

luxuriously along the most snobbish of the Quais. She was rather disappointed to find that his address, 6, *Rue Martinet*, was a cement barrack of modern studios, bristling with iron balconies and fire-escapes, but reassured by the bleakness of stone staircases that climbed to what she had thought of as his " attic decorated with beautiful thoughts " during their talk on the train.

She found him with her just-arrived letter lying open on the table in the middle of the room. Perhaps it was the north light from the big window, or perhaps he'd had a week of hard work or economical meals, that made him seem thinner and shabbier, although as vividly alive as she remembered.

" You're a good climber ! Seven flights ! Do sit down. I was enchanted to get your letter. I had begun to think it was just another journey-friendship."

" I was afraid I might find you out at work."

" Wheeling a hawker's barrow ? Or glued to an office stool ? " He hesitated, looking at her. Then asked quickly, " And you ? What are you doing, since I saw you ? "

" Nothing ! Not even arranging the flowers. There is a young man that Maman and her friends patronize who comes twice a week, and takes off his rings and arranges them, marvellously, walking from rose to rose on the tips of his toes ! " She added, with a sudden change from gaiety to impatience, " But I prefer to hear about you ! What have you been doing, Monsieur Choisy ? "

He sat on the table carefully rolling a cigarette. " Well . . . I've passed my nights drinking. You smile ? What have you done better ? What did you do yesterday ? What will you do today ? "

" Yesterday I went with Maman to a concert in the afternoon. And in the evening it was her ' Thursday '—when she has always a sort of supper. Today ? Well, this afternoon I have a fitting, and there is a *thé* at the English Embassy, and tonight I go to the theatre with a painter, d'Alvarez, who is a friend of my parents."

" *The* d'Alvarez ? Does he make love to you ? . . . But, naturally he does ! What will he take you to see ? "

" A play called *Picnique* that, it seems, everyone is talking about."

" Ah—*that !* "

" You've seen it ? You don't like it ? But it's a *succès fou !* "

He relit his cigarette. " I'll tell you what," he said, " that play (you'll see !) attacks the people who know how to *profit*, not only from wars but from peace, too, and from anything in fact, not excluding love. And since one of the things that excites such people is to be attacked, to enjoy with the sensation of self-contempt, they adore this play ! I can assure you, Mademoiselle, it is no

great play. But they certainly go ! And book seats weeks ahead ! " He shrugged his thin shoulders. " Anyway—that must be excellent for the author ! "

" Lefèbre ? "

" Yes."

" Maman has invited him to come to one of her Thursday suppers."

" Why do you get up ? Must you go, Mademoiselle ? "

" I must be at the coiffeur—"

" Ah ! To make yourself beautiful for M. d'Alvarez ! "

She coloured. " Certainly not ! "

When she'd left him, outside the concierge's lodge at his grim studio-building, she felt at the same time elated and strangely sad, moved, and curiously blissful.

D'Alvarez had taken a box.

As he took her coat off her shoulders, he murmured, " Continue with that mutinous little expression, Mademoiselle Gabrielle. It's very pretty. I've been admiring it during our dinner." He put his arm along the back of her chair. " And this white dress. It is perfect. The dress of a nymph—a little nymph who sits up very straight ! Who refuses to drink wine . . ."

It was Angèle who'd said, clipping the pearl " marguerite " in her hair, " Above all, don't drink wine, Mademoiselle," adding, with a long stare at the girl's reflection in the glass that " things had changed when a young girl could dine with such a one as M. d'Alvarez."

D'Alvarez handed her the programme. She read it, aware that people in the stalls were looking at her.

She wasn't surprised that the play was a success. She listened with vivid mobile attention to the three acts, with their dialogue clear and close-patterned as a mosaic, and the play took an almost unbearable grip of her imagination.

" So ! It interested you, Mademoiselle ? " d'Alvarez said, as she leaned forward, tense, clapping the last curtain.

She nodded, still speechless from the emotions of the play.

" It seems the author has sold the film rights very advantageously, and is at work on another play. I heard someone say in the foyer that he is here tonight."

The sense of the last words reached her through the loud continuous clapping and her own sensations of nervous exaltation.

" *Here ? Tonight ? . . . Lefèbre ? How* I should like to see him ! "

" He'll have gone by now ! Otherwise he'd be besieged for autographs."

With her gaze still on the lighted figures taking the curtain, she let him slip her white coat over her shoulders, then draw her arm through his, and lead her out of the back of the box, along the corridor, and across the foyer to where his car was waiting by the pavement outside. The chauffeur held the door. He got in beside her. As the door slammed, she burst into tears.

The car moved forward into the stream of traffic. She sobbed, first intensely, then uncertainly, not knowing why, scarcely aware of the lighted boulevards, the people moving past, trees and kiosks, the terraced cafés glowing beneath their awnings.

Only very gradually, as she became quiet, she realized that d'Alvarez was beside her. "You are cold! My poor child . . ." He added, "What an excitable little creature!" examining her profile with interest. "Such capacity for feeling is extremely interesting!"

The feel of his hand strangely comforted her. Now she felt chill, emptied, queerly shaken. And his nearness was solid—solid, and warm.

"You are beautiful when you are moved, Gabrielle! Let me put the coat round you, it has slipped off . . . That's better. Ah! But what cold little hands. Move nearer to me. That's better. We shall soon be back now . . ."

She shut her eyes, letting a slow, sweet, strange sensation of weight take possession of her; of not wanting to move.

His voice said, "Here we are . . ." and she stirred from drowsiness.

"Already?"

"Yes."

He handed her out; and it was she who clung for a moment to his hand, and murmured something, and then stopped.

"What were you going to say, my child?"

"Only—thank you."

He noted the dilated pupils of her soft-lashed eyes. He observed that she was trembling, and that she was breathing quickly, so that when she spoke her words came out unevenly, their tone veiled by a troubled huskiness. Then, having noted these satisfactory details, he took his massive hand from her arm, bowed courteously, and smiling a paternal benevolent, "Good night, Mademoiselle, and *à bientôt*," he left her, and went out, putting his opera hat on, and adjusting his white silk scarf as he strode along the moonlit Quai in the direction of the Pont d'Iena.

Having, as it were, established his sensual case, he was satisfied to wait. Indeed, it would have bored him to have no further experiments to look forward to.

Gabrielle made some quick-breathed assent to old Jean Pierre's,

"And Mademoiselle has enjoyed her evening?"—and went straight to her room.

She sat down on the stool before the dressing-table. Troubled, bewildered, she looked in the glass at her white face. Confusedly, with the nervous anger of non-comprehension, she tried to co-ordinate her reaction to the play, her sudden, violent preoccupation with the horrible d'Alvarez—and that feeling for Pierre Choisy that had unfurled in her this very morning, with a flower's startling, fragile splendour! With truculent, combative innocence she demanded an explanation from a self whose existence in her she hadn't suspected. What, surely, evil and monstrous emotion had made her feel drawn to d'Alvarez?

She hid her face in her hands, partly from sudden exhaustion, partly with a notion of praying.

Next morning she found her way up through the streets of Montmartre, and she saw "his" block of studios, its shadow dark-carpeting the sunny steepness of the *Rue Martinet*, and throwing a black drapery over the narrow steep houses opposite.

She went up the stone staircase to the top landing, and took the last few steps hesitantly. Perhaps, after all, he might be out? Or have friends with him?

She heard her own heart beating. She went to his door, and put her hand on the bell.

She rang. And waited.

There was no answer. She waited. Rang again.

She turned the handle, and found that the door opened. Now it was ajar and she could hear an alarm clock ticking somewhere inside and see a corner of the table, and a bit of the tartan-covered divan.

She went in. There were empty bottles under the table. Champagne bottles. About the room filled ash trays, glasses. Gabrielle stood looking, surprised; then puzzled. Then a series of questions came, crushing the eagerness, the confidence she'd come with, producing such a sharp sense of disillusion that it was like pain.

Her imagination began to piece together a new, an unbelievable conception of a sort of false *vie de bohème*. This studio, with its apparent simplicity and poverty, was merely scenery—for him to live such a life as any selfish, self-indulgent young man would find—amusing. She saw a woman's handbag of cheap worn leather lying on the corner of the divan. She picked it up. Gilt letters across the corner: *Yvette* . . . She threw it down, and turned; and swiftly went out, and down the flights of stone stairs.

From the foot of the stairs she crossed the courtyard; all around

the windows seemed to stare down, blear-glassed, cracked, shuttered, to mock at her for being a credulous little fool, full of convent-bred notions that there existed young men of the purest integrity, stuffed with ideals.

Those stained gilt letters, *Yvette*, seemed somehow bitterly significant.

The concierge, her big arms akimbo, was gossiping with a friend inside. Gabrielle stopped, and drew in a breath carefully.

" Madame—"

" *B'jour, Mademoiselle.*" The shrewd but stupid glance raked Gabrielle's bright hair and white face and small expensive shoes.

" Madame . . . Excuse me. But can you tell me—the Monsieur from upstairs—the studio up on the seventh floor ? He is—out ? "

" Ah ! Mademoiselle means M. Pierre Choisy ? Eh ? The young gentleman that we, of this quarter, call Monsieur Champagne ? Yes, Mademoiselle, he went out about an hour ago."

" Thank you . . . Madame." She added, with a last effort at composure, " Please tell him that Mademoiselle . . . Gabrielle called, but regrets she . . . she will not be able to come again."

Monsieur Champagne ! . . .

It must have been after three in the afternoon when she got home. Jean Pierre opened the door. Her mother's voice called out, " Gabrielle ? "

" Yes, Maman." She went into the *salon*, whose opened double doors connected it with the smaller room where her mother was at her writing table.

" Is something the matter, Gabrielle ? You look tired ? "

" Nothing is the matter, thank you, Maman."

" Ah ! *Mon Dieu*—this telephone again ! Yes ? This is Madame de Bercy speaking ! You are the secretary of—Monsieur Lefèbre ? Monsieur Armand Lefèbre ! "

Gabrielle, leaning back in one of the pretty stiff-backed chairs, only half heard the usual artificially enthusiastic voice that Hortense de Bercy used to anyone whom she wished to please, or exploit, socially. She sat with her eyes shut, and her fingers clenched.

She thought, " At least d'Alvarez *is what he seems !* At least he doesn't make a façade, to impress one, to seduce one's admiration, one's idealism—one's much too foolish heart . . . "

Her mother put down the receiver. She rose and went to the window that looked down over the trees to the spinning coins of light on the Seine.

" D'Alvarez telephoned just before lunch. He is coming in at about six o'clock to pay us a little visit."

There was a moment's pause. And then Gabrielle's sentence fell cool and light and concise through the silence of the room.

" I am enchanted that M. d'Alvarez is coming."

On the map called " Women," pinned up in the mind of the amorist, there are clearly defined routes and obstacles, deserts and oases, jungles and pleasure grounds, blind alleys and treacherous depths, as well as exhilarating heights. For the complacent possessors of this map, no region of Woman has been left uncharted.

Carlos d'Alvarez possessed such a map. He knew to within half a dozen heart-beats, when the ascent to a woman's favour begins, where the terrain quakes with betrayal, what casual chance word or gesture shows the approach to indifference.

He found Gabrielle de Bercy refreshingly interesting, not only because of her beauty and innocence, but because, having now in his mind the idea of marrying her, she offered the interest of " civilizing " a quite fresh territory. To change a young girl into a woman of experience was always a delightful adventure.

Just after six o'clock, he came up in the elevator at the Quai de Beaugency with a feeling of assurance agreeably tempered with uncertainty. Jean Pierre informed him that Madame was still out, but that Mademoiselle Gabrielle was in the salon.

D'Alvarez went in, with his quick light walk.

Taking her hand, he kissed it with a marked tenderness. " One should not kiss the hand of a *jeune fille?* " Keeping her hand in his, he touched her cheek with his left forefinger.

" And how are you today, Mademoiselle Gabrielle ? Not tired ? Not too much impressed still—by the play ? Which I think all the same," he added, " wasn't so wonderful."

Gabrielle said, " Not tired at all, thank you," and let him keep her hand in his as they sat down on the sofa. She breathed uncomfortably ; as if her body were insisting on living, while her real life was dead.

She heard him saying, " I have something to say to you. Perhaps it is a little soon . . ."

She shook her head. If he chose to want what wasn't her heart or soul, certainly, there didn't seem any reason why he shouldn't be told—what he was now purring to be told.

" A little bit ? " he asked. " Could you love me, a very little bit, Gabrielle ? Enough even to think of me, as a husband ? "

" But yes," she said with the unhappy, urgent eagerness of a cheated spirit to dispose of its body.

" But yes," she repeated, letting his strong short arm close about her waist, the sheer bankruptcy of her mood seeming to urge her to grasp at the small change of sensual relief.

With her acceptance of d'Alvarez, Gabrielle knew she had accepted a new point of view, a new set of values. Like someone in the process of naturalization, she now, deliberately, turned her whole consciousness away from the traditions and passions, loyalties and beliefs of her former life, renouncing, as it seemed, her whole past world of schoolgirl ideals for that fact-facing world inhabited by her parents. Like emigrants leaving their childhood's home, she set her face away from a whole structure of loved beliefs and precious spiritual possessions. She was with d'Alvarez every day, and, although Pierre Choisy still strangely haunted her sleep, her whole waking life now was set to live down the fantastically romantic girl who had come back to Paris, on that journey of only three weeks ago.

And this unhappiness only got full possession of her when she was alone at night; and old Angèle (still mysteriously, at midnight, or one or two in the morning, in her black blouse and skirt and little darned white apron) would bring in a *tisane*, setting it, without comment, on the table beside the bed.

Madame de Bercy's Thursday "little suppers"—"interrupted," as she often explained, "during the sad days of the Occupation, but now happily resumed"—began about ten p.m. and would continue until three or four in the morning.

On this Thursday Gabrielle knew her mother was especially pleased as Armand Lefèbre had consented to come. Several times Gabrielle, standing in a corner and accepting congratulations on her engagement to d'Alvarez, couldn't help watching with admiration how her mother went on welcoming people and tying little labels around their necks. To newcomers she said, "You must forgive the simplicity of my little suppers, 'fork' suppers as the Americans call them!"

Carlos said, "Your mother looks very beautiful this evening . . . The Duchesse looks very beautiful this evening . . . You look very beautiful this evening, *ma chérie* . . ." Gabrielle had the habit of his voice, as of his proximity now. He brought her another glass of wine and sat down again beside her. More people came up and congratulated her. And she repeated "that she was extremely happy," "very fortunate," with a facile swimmy politeness as if she were in a dream, and talked with glib amiability to one guest after another. She was listening to the old Vicomte de Combray talking about his racehorses when she heard her mother's, "*Ah!* But M. Armand Lefèbre! Carlos—let me present . . ." A moment later it was Carlos, advancing now with, "Monsieur Lefèbre, may I introduce you to my fiancée, Mademoiselle de Bercy, who was so much moved by your play only a few nights ago?"

She stared. Stared up from her sofa at the thin vivid face. The eyes of Pierre Choisy looked down into hers; without intimacy, without interest.

Carlos left them to felicitate an elderly Marchesa on her appearance.

"I congratulate you, Mademoiselle. I had no idea you were engaged—and to Carlos d'Alvarez . . ."

She said, with an abrupt inward anger that gave her poise, "It's *I* who should congratulate *you—Monsieur Champagne!*"

He questioned abruptly, "Who told you that name?"

"Your concierge!"

"Ah!" His dark excitable look searched hers. After a few seconds he said, "When?"

She answered him, not meaning to, "I came. And you weren't there."

"In the morning? The morning after I'd seen you?"

"Yes."

"You came up? I wasn't there? You—went in?" He sat down beside her on the sofa.

"Yes. I went in." She added, "After that your charming nickname didn't seem unsuitable. *And—added* to that—you are also 'M. Lefèbre' the famous young playwright! As a comedy it is marvellous! You should write it! It should be called '*Poseur*'."

She was too angry to notice his hand tremble as he took out a cigarette.

"You seem to have discovered a good deal about my life." He stared past her at d'Alvarez who was coming towards them between the groups of people. "Why do you suppose I came here tonight?"

"How should I know? A *coup de théâtre*—to make an entrance? To enjoy your 'mysterious' celebrity? To go *out* to a party, for a change!"

D'Alvarez had paused to speak to someone.

The young man said quietly, "Tell me one thing, Gabrielle? You weren't engaged to Carlos d'Alvarez when you came, the other morning?"

"No."

As she spoke he was called to, acclaimed, first by one group, then another. Gabrielle saw her mother come up to him, arranging her charm as if she'd put it on, like a new dress, especially for him. And now d'Alvarez was saying to her:

"He is charming, M. Lefèbre! But I find that for a celebrity he is not well dressed. Neither the real Bohemian style nor the elegance of a man-of-the-world."

Now other people joined d'Alvarez and Gabrielle; and she

answered their questions and she went on joining in successive conversations without, for one single second, losing awareness of where Pierre was in the crowded room.

But he never looked once in her direction. And, after half an hour she saw him go to her mother and make his *adieux*.

She murmured to d'Alvarez that she had a headache, and would take some aspirin in her room.

Down in the moonlit quai he'd gone!

She looked up and down. A taxi came, its round yellow lights glaring in the black and silver of trees and pavements and river.

She gave the address, "6, *Rue Martinet*."

The night-Paris she drove through was without beauty. The shutters of the houses were the eyelids of despair; finger-pointing chimneys seemed to accuse the whole starred sky of indifference; the steepening cobbled vistas of Montmartre were tortuous as deception.

The shadow-patched *Rue Martinet* gripped her throat.

She rang the concierge's bell. It tinkled somewhere far off in a stertorous, fusty bedroom. The heavy door clicked. She pushed it open and went into the courtyard, and stood still, staring up to row upon row of shuttered windows. And very high up, one wide, tall, studio window, flared yellow-lit in the blue-white of the cement walls. So, one of his parties had begun already. No wonder he'd hurried away, back to his friends . . . To Yvette?

She crossed the courtyard, and began to go up the stone stairs, first walking, then running, driven by a strange passion of anger. Up the last flight . . . Now the top landing.

She stood still. Inside the closed doors she could hear voices and exclamations. She went closer to the door. Heard a woman's laugh, husky and sharp-edged . . .

She turned the handle slowly. Opened the door.

As she'd expected, a crowd of people. The light from the high-up strong electric lamp flooded down on them; the haze of their cigarette smoke furled and drifted, hyacinth-blue in its brilliance. They were drinking and talking as half an hour ago, her mother's guests, too, had been drinking and talking.

She stayed at the door, quite still. The light flooded down. It picked out heads, faces, gestures, the tilt of a woman's hat, its veil scribbled across the white-paper face and mascara-clotted lashes beneath it. It defined the hollow beneath a cheekbone, the too angular turn of a jaw line, the bird-bright black shine of eyes in a pouchy face above a knotted neck-scarf, the curiously dark-grey and bright-white effect of violent rouge on a drawn sick face. It emphasized bulging curves, caught the exaggerated emaciated

angles of bodies; the chance tilt of a queer nose, the gape of nostril, slant or wink or stare of eye. An insidious dank, wretched smell—the smell of poverty—seeped through cigarette smoke and heavy cheap scent.

Gabrielle's mind and senses and then, slowly, her comprehension, her astonishment, her terrified pity, were invaded and startled by the scene before her. These faces that laughed, or puckered, or were set in cunning or bleared dullness; these hands knotted and reddened, or clawlike, or tawdry-flashing, that held the wine-glasses; these bodies, that were too hot, or stale, or acrid with cheap fragrance; these human beings that had been as starved of the decent beauty of cleanliness as of the sweetness of affection, or the gentleness of security, these—she began to understand now—were his party! Pierre Choisy's—Armand Lefèbre's—party!

They came up here from a whole Paris she didn't know! From a city she'd so little imagined that when these same people passed her in the street, their ugliness, or vileness of face, had merely alarmed or disconcerted her.

Now Gabrielle watched him, Pierre, among them; saw the ease and gaiety and—love—they felt coming from him. And remembered him an hour ago, at her mother's house, detached, ironically polite, allowing his indifference to be mistaken for the conceit of the young "celebrity."

He hadn't yet seen her. With his back turned he was deep in talk with a gaunt old man, who shed an air of winking benevolence on his young host.

Through an irresistible blinding of tears, Gabrielle looked again at the women, their faces coarse or grim, leering or tragic. Now one of them, an old one, approached her and laid a hand on her shoulder.

"But what's the matter with her, *cette petite?* . . . *Hein?* What do you cry for?" Her husky voice murmured and exclaimed. She was big and heavily built; her face thickly rouged, her hair dyed marigold colour, her eyelids rimmed blue. Her eye-sockets drooped puffily at the outer corners over the long, tawny, lynx-wary eyes; the jaw and chin's massiveness held up the soft-wrinkled powdered flesh . . . "You have some sorrow!"

She was holding a glass half filled. A musky sweet perfume hung round her, and she seemed to speak of sorrow with a sort of affectionate familiarity as if she and sorrow had known a long companionship, so many hard beds and thin blankets, and bleared bleak mornings, such worn pairs of shoes on wet streets, so many hours of stubborn desolation . . .

"But don't cry, *ma petite.* Cheer up, *mon coco.* It's old Yvette who says it to you . . ."

He, Pierre, came now. "Gabrielle?"

She couldn't speak.

Old Yvette kept on patting her shoulder. "A little wine for her, Monsieur Pierre, eh?"

"Gabrielle?" he said.

She said, "How *stupid* I am . . . I was . . ."

"*Stupid?*"

"Come, *ma petite* . . ." The big Yvette led her towards one of the red-covered divans. "Monsieur Pierre will look after you! He is very good, our Monsieur Pierre. There, there; one has such sorrows when one is young! But they pass. They pass . . . One forgets—" She went on murmuring reassurances like an old nurse. "And now, look. The good Monsieur Pierre is bringing you a little glass. If you drink that you will be better . . ."

She glanced across Gabrielle's bowed head at her host. Her underlip jutted, and one mascara'd, dauntlessly bright eye winked between lids that were dried as petals in a pot-pourri.

"It is, no doubt, a little *chagrin d'amour*! Eh, Monsieur Pierre? A little love-sickness! Eh?" She slipped him this opinion out of the corner of her mouth, like a racing tip.

"Perhaps," he said slowly. He was looking down at Gabrielle, and had her hand in his. And, as he spoke, she looked up.

* * *

ANSWERS to BUILDING LICENCE on page 12

1. *Solomon's Temple in the Old Testament, I Kings.*
2. *The Snow Queen's Palace in "The Snow Queen," by Hans Andersen.*
3. *The House in the giant tree in "The Swiss Family Robinson," by Johann Rudolf Wyss.*
4. *Rickamere Hall, where Ethel went a-visiting, in "The Young Visiters," by Daisy Ashford.*
5. *The Lin homestead in "The House of Exile," by Nora Waln.*
6. *The home of Strickland and Ata in "The Moon and Sixpence," by W. Somerset Maugham.*
7. *Pandemonium, Satan's Palace, in Milton's "Paradise Lost."*
8. *Merlyn's cottage in "The Sword in the Stone," by T. H. White.*
9. *King's College Chapel in Wordsworth's three sonnets "Inside of King's College Chapel, Cambridge."*

ROAD TO THE ISLES

It's by Shiel Water that the track is to the west
By Ailort and by Morar to the sea

KENNETH MACLEOD

Most of Mull's history known to us is that of the Macleans, who gained their footing through the marriage of one Lachlan with á daughter of John Macdonald, Lord of the Isles, in 1366. The Macleans, who were a clan as early as 1250, claim descent from an Irish king a thousand years or so earlier. So proud, indeed, were they of their ancient origin that when a stranger ironically inquired of a clansman how his ancestors had contrived to survive the Flood, he received the haughty reply, " The Macleans had a boat of their own."

J. J. BELL; *The Glory of Scotland*

Jacobite Country

Lone places of the deer,
Corrie, and Loch and Ben,
Fount that wells in the cave,
Voice of the burn and the wave,
Softly you sing and clear
Of Charlie and his men !

Here has he lurked, and here
The heather has been his bed,
The wastes of the islands knew,
And the Highland hearts were true
To the bonny, the brave, the dear,
The royal, the hunted head.

ANDREW LANG, 1844-1912

Further Outlook Unsettled

Your first thought on awakening in the Isle of Skye is to tap the hotel barometer. You go downstairs to find that Colonel X., who killed five salmon last week, is glaring at the instrument as a defaulter.

" Going up, damn it," he says. " Need rain, heaps of it, no water in the river."

Major B., who shot a " Royal " last year, comes along, packing the first pipe of the day.

" Going up," he says, " that's the stuff."

Mr. D. A., member of the mountaineering club, thunders downstairs like a shire horse, wearing enormous dubbined boots, embroidered with crab-like nails. He smacks the barometer in the eye and remarks: " Ah! Going up. I'm afraid it's going to be misty, but as long as the rain holds off . . ."

Then arrives Miss Y., who wages a desperate battle with Skye and water-colours.

" Is it really going up, Colonel? How enchanting. Now I may get Loch Coruisk in ideal light. That blue, you know, like those grapes they give you when you've been frightfully ill."

The colonel, who desperately requires rain in great sheets, and privately regards Miss Y.'s conflicts with nature as contemptible, makes a noise like a bull already frightfully ill and hides his feelings behind an Indian cheroot.

H. V. MORTON, *In Search of Scotland*

Blue Men of the Minch

As the summer wind goes droning o'er the sun-bright seas,
And the Minch is all a-dazzle to the Hebrides,
They will skim along like salmon—you can see their shoulders gleam,
And the flashing of their fingers in the Blue Men's Stream.

But when the blast is raving and the wild tide races,
The Blue Men are breast-high with foam-grey faces ;
They'll plunge along with fury while they sweep the spray behind,
O, they'll bellow o'er the billows and wail upon the wind.

DONALD A. MACKENZIE

Own Produce

Last night poor Brown with his feet blistered and scarcely able to walk after a trudge of 20 Miles down the Side of Loch Awe had no supper but Eggs and Oat Cake—we have lost the sight of white bread entirely—Now we had eaten nothing but Eggs all day—about 10 a piece and they had become sickening—Today we have fared rather better—but no Oat Cake wanting—we had a small chicken and even a good bottle of Port but altogether the fare is too coarse . . .

Sometimes when I am tired I lean rather languishingly on a rock, and long for some famous Beauty to get down from her Palfrey in passing—approach me with her saddlebags and give me—a dozen or two capital roast-beef sandwiches.

JOHN KEATS

Good Hunting

As for the little growling doe
And her young fawns who bide
In a hidden glen ill to know
High up the mountain side,
The ear she has ! And the eye !
And the quick deft feet to ply
Over the boggling peat-hags !
Lightning behind her lags.
Though Caoilte and Cuchullin
Sought her they'd be fooling.
The sight would not daunt her
Of them and every hunter,
With all the men and horses
Hire-bound by King George ; their forces
Would include nothing to catch her
If she wished to escape ; watch her,
Gallant, long-legged, swift-turning,
Incalculable, her white-flared hips burning
Like stars in the distance !

DUNCAN BAN MACINTYRE, 1724-1808,
translated from the Gaelic by Hugh MacDiarmid

Language of Eden

We had a dashing encounter with two small Eigg citizens, at an intersection of roads which puzzled us about our proper direction. A small girl of about six appeared, leading a tiny infant by the hand. It was an infant at that stage when, seen walking, they look even tinier than a babe in arms, and the pace it was setting was an almost imperceptible forward stacher. Here was an opportunity to have a neutral verdict on our Gaelic. We approached the pair gently, not to frighten them, and the following conversation went through in Gaelic without a hitch :

" Which is the road to the post office ? "

" That's it yonder."

" Great thanks to thyself, O little girl."

We turned back to wave to her, and she waved without shyness, and also revolved the incredibly small child on his axis, so that he was looking eventually in our direction and could wave too. Those two made a brave little picture on the down side of the brae from us, with sixty miles of the Scottish coast for their backcloth.

ALASTAIR M. DUNNETT, *Quest by Canoe : Glasgow to Skye*

ONE QUIET EVENING

"Like to go for a run?" said Joe, and he heard no warning bell

by SUSAN SEAVY

IN all the soft spring day there was no hint of the thing that was to happen. Diana had bought herself a new hat because it was spring. It wasn't much of a hat, just a wisp of veiling and a rose which nodded over one eye. It was not a hat you would associate with fear.

Certainly Diana had no such thought. She found the hat bewitching. It emphasized her personality, the saleswoman had said, and Diana agreed. She was small and shapely, with close-cut dark hair that curled of its own accord. Her short nose was almost straight and when she smiled—which was often—her cheeks were becomingly dimpled.

Later in the day, when she put on the hat for Joe to see, she was all dimples and small white teeth and sparkling dark eyes. She turned slowly for him to view her. And Joe looked and heard no warning bell, felt no tightening of his nerves.

"D'you call that a hat?" he said.

He meant it to be funny, but Diana felt a rush of distaste that banished her springtime mood. Joe had long ago ceased to be funny, and it was mean of him to spoil the happiest day she had spent for a long time. If it had been their next-door neighbour, Fred Barclay, who looked at the hat, he'd have said—oh, well, never mind. Joe was Joe and nothing was going to change him. Still, she wished that she could show the hat to Fred.

Joe held up her new spring coat and asked if she wanted to go for a run, and a little of her mood returned. In the car the air blew sweet and cool and she could feel the rose on the new hat bumping against her forehead ever so gently. She looked at Joe, big and beginning to be burly, and wished guiltily that he were someone else. She didn't wish that he were Fred, but she wished he were someone like Fred, smooth and exciting and able to make her aware of herself as a charming woman.

Diana was sick for romance. Her idea of heaven at this moment was a ballroom where an orchestra played softly, where guests

watched admiringly as she walked across the gleaming floor. Behind her walked a faceless man in immaculate evening clothes.

She looked at Joe and could not remember why she had married him.

" Where to, old girl ? "

Diana started to say she didn't care, just because she hated to have him call her " old girl." She caught herself in time and said, " How about the coast ? " as if it didn't really matter. There were some rather nice cafés along the coast road.

" Okay," Joe nodded.

But before he found the turning he wanted, Joe saw the sailor with a thumb up for a lift. Diana didn't want him to stop, but then Joe was Joe and it was no use saying anything. He'd seen the day when he needed a lift himself, Joe liked to say.

The sailor, it turned out, was hoping for a lift down to the docks.

" We might as well drive down there, mightn't we, pet ? " Joe asked.

The sailor climbed into the back seat and that was that. He was a tall thin boy with acne, and he hardly deserved the smile Diana gave him. He started telling Joe the story of his life, and Diana shut her ears to the voices and concentrated on the soft air and the way it made her feel.

" Here ! " said Joe loudly. " I'm almost out of petrol ! "

She jumped a little and wished he wouldn't shout. She wondered if the petrol station at which he was stopping had a clean ladies' room. And then she noticed the young man in the coupé, parked on the other side of the petrol pumps, straight across from where they were parked.

She noticed his hat first. It was a flat straw boater. Joe called them sissy, but Diana admired them. Then she noticed the man's eyes, which protruded slightly and were too large, but which looked soulful and sort of romantic just the same.

The garage hand was talking to the man, but the man was looking at Diana.

Diana said, " Excuse me, please," to Joe and got out of the car. She wished she had worn high heels, since flat sandals certainly didn't do anything for her legs. She wondered if the man in the coupé was watching her in his driving mirror. And then she stepped between the pumps and crossed the gravelled drive in search of the ladies' room.

She was inside and had combed her hair twice and strengthened her faith in the new hat before she saw the sticky gob of something that was stuck to the side of her sandal. It had got bits of gravel stuck on it too, and she took a paper towel and rubbed at it distastefully. It was blood.

Of course it was not blood, she thought. Where could she have got into blood ? It must be something else.

Still—it was blood.

Funny, then, how it hit her. A chill seemed to be in the air. Only it was not in the air ; the chill was in her, and it was fear.

She stared about the ladies' room, but it was scrubbed quite clean. Only a faint stain showed near the door where she herself had stepped. She was silly to be so frightened, she thought. Probably someone out there had had a nose-bleed. Or cut his hand. But still, the things in her life that had been so important a moment ago were no longer important. She wanted Joe's strength—now, this minute.

She picked up her hat and bag and went out, ready to run like a child. But she held herself in and peered about, looking for what she had stepped into. She saw a trace of it on the drive. Someone did have a nose-bleed, she thought with a deep breath.

The motor of the coupé was running. She was looking at the car when she saw a drop of something hit the ground under the boot. On top of the oily gravel a small circle settled and spread to about the size of a shilling. She realized it was the same stuff she had found on her shoe.

The coupé was pulling away from the station and Diana could feel the man's eyes watching her in the mirror.

Oh, heavens, said Diana's mind, oh, heavens . . .

She fixed her eyes on the registration plate of the coupé and repeated the numbers to herself.

Desperately she took a hair grip from her hair and scratched the number of the registration plate in the paint on a petrol pump.

" Joe—" she said weakly. " Joe—"

" Why, what's wrong with you, old girl ? "

" Blood," said Diana. " It came out of that car. Joe, I *stepped* in it ! "

" Darling, you're crazy. Probably paint."

He was out of the car though and holding her. Oblivious to her loneliness of a few moments past, he was aware now of her fear and he wrapped his arms about her to ward it off. The sailor was there too and the garage attendant.

" Look there," said Diana, pointing. " It came out from the boot of that car. I saw it."

The attendant poked at the spot with a stick, and then they saw another similar spot near by—also freshly made. The sailor watched him. Joe still held Diana.

" Probably been shootin' rabbits," the sailor said.

" Not hereabouts. Anyway, no sportsman's dressed like that or shoves an animal dripping blood into a car." The attendant stood up suddenly. " I'm going to call the police."

"Police? Oh, Joe, then do you think—?"

"Could be." And to the sailor. "Let's see if we can catch him!"

Joe kissed her quickly and ran to the other side of the car. "You wait here for us, Diana. We won't get hurt."

They were gone with a roar of the engine. Diana stood in the drive, watching the garage attendant at the telephone inside the station and remembering the limpid romantic eyes of the young man in the coupé. Only they didn't seem romantic now. They seemed sinister and inhuman and she felt afraid.

The attendant came out and copied the numbers from the petrol pump. "That was quick thinking, lady," he said. But the admiration in his voice did not warm Diana. The only warmth in the world was in Joe's two arms.

That's how it had been with her long ago, she remembered. There had been one warm and friendly place in the whole world and that was in Joe's arms. She thought about it because it shocked her a little to remember and because if she didn't think about Joe she'd think about the coupé and what might be in it.

She remembered the first time she had met Joe—the night she lost her job at the insurance company. She'd needed that job. She hadn't any family or money. She hadn't been able to believe it when her employer told her publicly that she was sacked.

One of the young salesmen came after her when she was half-way down the stairs.

"Don't feel badly about it," he said. "That old so-and-so hasn't the sense to know if a letter's typed right or not."

She couldn't speak, but she looked at him and found his face kind.

Two weeks from that day they were married.

It was fun being married to Joe. Joe had to work a lot harder in those days—it took a long time to sell enough insurance to have a good income—but it had been fun. At night they'd wash the dishes together and then Diana would help him with his papers.

The best times of those days had been the long lazy weekends together. Sometimes they packed a lunch and went hiking. They usually ended up lying on the sun-warmed side of a hill, talking a little, but mostly just lying with their hands touching, saying nothing. In those days there had been no necessity for talking.

Now, in the petrol station, she waited for Joe, saying in her mind, "Hurry, Joe, hurry. Come back to me safely."

And she thought, Where did it go, the thing we had? Where has the change slipped in?

It had seemed to creep in gradually from the time Joe started

making more money. He had said, " Well, we ought to do a little entertaining." Only it hadn't been just a little entertaining.

Since then, Diana had served enough sandwiches and beer to feed an army. That was all Joe's friends ever seemed to want to eat. She'd have liked a party now and then where she could have worn a strapless evening dress and talked about something other than football.

Yet these men were dear to Joe's heart. The days went by and she began guiltily to wonder how she could love him when they were so different. And the more she saw the difference between Joe and her, the more she drew away from him. And, oddly, the further away from him she drew, the more he had to have people around him. And the more marked the difference and the strain became.

The months of cold war were washing back now. And Diana felt the new-old need to be close to Joe, really close, so that he could shut out the evil of the world, as he had once. Had he packed all those people into his life because she had drawn away from him when his money troubles eased and he didn't need her work and planning to help him ? Could it have started like that ?

Oh, hurry, Joe, hurry. I need to find out. And I'm afraid, standing here and thinking about things that happen in the world.

Joe and the sailor returned before the police arrived. The coupé must have turned off, they reported. Otherwise they'd have caught it.

A lot of talk went backwards and forwards between the men, and Diana stood with Joe's arm round her and felt her fear mounting with their words. Then she got excited and talked too, telling them what the man had looked like.

When the police came there was more talking, there were more questions and answers and finally it was over and it left them all feeling a little flat and let down.

A kinship had grown up between the four of them at the petrol station. It was the known, banding together against the unfamiliar. With reluctance, they said goodbye to the attendant and drove on. Joe said why didn't they all have dinner together, and it seemed a good idea.

Over the meal they wondered if the police had found the car and what it held. They remembered recent murders they had read about in the papers, but Diana said reading about it was a lot different from being part of it.

By the time they finished eating it was late, so they drove the sailor to his ship and told him to be sure to look them up next time he came their way. He promised and waved to them from the dock.

" He's nice," Diana said, as Joe turned the car round.

" Yes," said Joe, " he's a nice chap."

Twilight was settling into darkness now. Diana slid closer to Joe and rested her head on his shoulder, half closing her eyes. The drone of the engine soothed her and made her sleepy.

She felt Joe's foot on the brake before she saw the figure on the darkening roadside.

"Not tonight, Joe," she protested.

But the car slowed and the man was trotting up the road after it.

"Now, old girl—" Joe said and stopped the car.

Diana didn't recognize the man immediately. There was the dark, and then he had discarded the straw hat, leaving the front part of his head bald and shiny. He was now wearing a dark coat.

He was looking at her through the window of the car when she saw his eyes—large and slightly protruding, cloaked by unusually heavy lids.

"Oh, Joe, it's him!" she said, but terror throttled her voice to a muffled squeak.

"What?" Joe asked. "What did you say, old girl?"

Then the man was in the car, his voice smiling. "Thanks. I thought for sure I'd have to walk."

"That's all right," Joe said. "I've been stuck a few times myself. Where are you going?"

"Wherever you are. The first bus stop you pass where I can get a connection into town." He settled himself comfortably. "The things a man will go through to see a woman," he said.

Joe laughed with him. "I walked fifteen miles once to see Diana here."

Diana crouched down on the seat, their voices going through her like needles. She couldn't breathe. She couldn't think. Yet her breathing went on and her thoughts went on. He could not have recognized her. She could ask Joe to stop at a petrol station. No, he might see her then, at the 'phone. At a chemist's. One might still be open. She could buy something. Tooth-paste. No, Joe would remind her that they had tooth-paste. Cold cream.

"Joe," she could say, "I've just remembered, I'm out of cold cream. Will you stop at a chemist's, please?" When he stopped she could get out—if she could walk, she'd get out. Perhaps Joe would leave him at a bus stop first. Perhaps he'd just get out of the car, not recognizing her at all. She kept her face stiffly towards the front.

Then she remembered her hat. The thought was like a rock hitting her squarely in the stomach, sickening her. Anybody would remember that hat.

Her stiff hands, like hands in a dream, reached up and removed

the hat and placed it beside her on the seat and then clenched themselves together in her lap. The rose nodded up at her with pathetic bravery.

It was a mistake. She knew it at once. He hadn't even seen the hat until she took it off. She heard the change in his voice. He sounded as though he were leaning forward tensely.

"Is your wife ill, mister?"

Diana began to pray in silence. Joe put his big warm hand over her two cold ones.

"No," he said. "She's a little upset."

Don't tell him, Joe, begged Diana silently.

But Joe was Joe. And so he was telling their passenger, who simply sat there listening. "The police have probably picked him up before this," Joe ended.

"Very likely," said the voice from the back. "Still policemen are pretty dense." The voice was so changed that it was a wonder Joe did not notice.

"Seems to me they usually do pretty well in a case like this," Joe argued. Good thing Diana had sense enough to write down his registration number. Lots of girls wouldn't."

"Very clever of her," said the voice.

You don't die of fear, Diana discovered. You only think you're dying. Her hands went to her throat and felt the pulse throbbing there. Her stomach was gone, leaving a vacuum that sucked downwards, wanting air.

Too late for the chemist's now. She'd spoiled that. Too late to do anything except shout out to Joe that this was the man. Perhaps Joe could do something then—wreck the car or something.

"Here you are, old man," said Joe. "This bus stop'll do you." He had his foot on the brake.

"Keep driving," the man said.

Diana turned her eyes without moving her head and saw the gun at the back of Joe's neck and the peculiar look on Joe's face.

Joe kept driving.

"I don't get it," he said.

"You don't need to, mister," the man said. "Just keep driving."

"I haven't any money on me."

The man didn't bother to answer.

"If you want the car, you can have it," said Joe. "They'll pick you up though. Before you know it."

"Shut up," said the man.

Joe shut up and drove where the man told him. His face was tight, with little lumps of muscle standing out where his jaws clamped together.

The silence was broken only by the man's voice. " Turn right—turn left—straight ahead—"

Diana could hear her heart beating now. And feel it. The houses became scattered, and then there were no houses but just the road climbing the side of a hill covered with brushwood.

The tip of a full moon poked itself up over the hill. To their left the cliff fell away into empty echoing blackness.

" Slow now," said the man. " There's a road along here turning to your right. A side road."

He'll shoot Joe, thought Diana, and then—she had to tell Joe who this man was. Joe hadn't seen him at the petrol station, so even now he just assumed that the man wanted the car. Joe thought the fellow would turn them loose up here. He hadn't any idea what really was happening.

" There ! " said the man.

Joe eased the car on to the side road. It was narrow and rutted.

" Joe," gasped Diana.

" Shut up." The gun was hard between her own shoulders.

The road nosed into a cut in the hill and ended abruptly.

The moment the car stopped, the man's arm lifted and the gun came down hard over Joe's temple. Joe slumped over the wheel and Diana had the door open on her side and was half out when the hand caught her, clutching her coat.

Diana screamed. A shrill scream but without volume. Then she came loose from the coat and ran, stumbling into the undergrowth.

The man did not fire although she was a plain target in the moonlight. He lost a moment getting out of the car, and then she heard him coming after her. He was laughing.

Something of her strength had come back at the feel of the ground under her feet. For a moment her thoughts were clear. He wouldn't shoot as near the road as this if he didn't have to. She should have run towards the main road instead of away from it. But she couldn't change direction now. He was too close behind her.

It was funny how fear had robbed her body of substance. She felt as if she were floating. The flat-heeled sandals were sure on the turf, and her feet leaped over small bushes without effort.

She found that she was running along the crest of a ridge that went down for a bit and then turned upwards in a sharp incline. The certainty that she'd had for a minute—that she could outrun the man—was slipping from her. If only there were trees behind which she could hide.

There was nothing.

Behind her the man laughed.

And it came to her that he could catch her when he wanted. That he enjoyed this. It was a game he played.

She made her legs go faster, but it was hard now. She was no longer floating. Her feet were heavy weights, dragging her down. Her mouth was wide, sucking for air, and her lungs were ragged and bursting.

The ridge led upwards to an outcrop of rock. A semblance of path encircled it and wound to its top.

Pain like a knife cut into Diana's lungs. The path was too steep. She must stop, yet she could not.

At the top she fell on her hands and knees, gulping for air. She could hear him coming close now. Her hands rested on a large, loose rock and she found she could lift it.

She looked below. She could see him just beneath her, his teeth bared, the moonlight showing little drops of sweat on his forehead quite plainly. In another second he would be in line with her, just about four feet below. She aimed the rock a little in front of the shiny bald place on the front of his head and let go.

He looked up and dodged. She heard his laughter. She whirled to run once more, but at last her feet turned traitor. She stumbled, caught herself, stumbled again and fell. And the man was upon her.

She lay on her face and he put his knee in the small of her back and held her, pushing hard. She heard the harsh sound of his breathing above her own. And another sound. The cruel pressure of his knee relaxed. There was noise in the night and the sick sound of stone on bare flesh. Then silence. Except for ragged breathing.

Diana looked up with the fear cold within her.

" Are you all right, old girl ? "

It was Joe. Blood on his face and on his shirt. Joe had run a race too, and he was lying flat on the ground, his chest heaving. Beyond him the man was a motionless black lump.

" Diana ! Are you all right ? "

" Joe." Because she could not help it, she began to cry. " Oh, Joe, I thought you were dead ! "

" Oh, don't be silly, sweetheart." He came and raised her and crouched there cradling her in his arms. " He couldn't get any swing in that car. Besides, he didn't know how hard my head is." Gently he rocked her in his arms. " Come on. You're all right now, dearest. I was right behind him all the way. The crazy fool didn't even hear me and I tore down more bushes than a bulldozer."

" Is he dead ? "

" He's just out. I conked him with a rock."

" Joe—it's the man in the petrol station ! "

" I thought you said—"

" He looked different with his hat on. But it's him."

" Well ! I'd better get that gun of his. Just in case."

Joe kissed her and picked up the gun.

"Better tie him up," Joe said. "Good thing he's got a tie on." He pulled the man's hands behind him and bound them with the tie. He used his own belt for the man's feet.

"I'll be darned," he said. "So that's why you went on in that funny way when I picked him up. Well, let's go, sweetheart. He can wait here for the police."

A long time after that they were driving home. They had seen the police. Joe had gone with them to show them the way to the cliff and Diana had waited for him at the police station.

The coupé had been picked up, they told her, on a side street down near the harbour. Another mutilation murder. The car had been reported stolen that morning. And they'd suggested that perhaps it wasn't just chance that the murderer had thumbed a lift with Diana and Joe . . . perhaps the murderer had been aware of Diana's discovery in the petrol station.

Another mutilation murder. Diana sat there with her new spring coat covering her torn dress and thought about it. She looked at the scratches on her legs and felt the rose nodding against her forehead. She thought for a long time and so apparently did Joe.

"I've been thinking we don't know each other very well any more. I was thinking we ought to have some days to ourselves once in a while the way we used to." Joe's voice was suddenly imploring. "Would you like that, old girl?"

Diana found it hard to talk. She answered by leaning against Joe's shoulder and finding the old place where her head just fitted.

Once Joe passed a hitch-hiker with only a slight twitch of his foot on the brake. And when Diana turned on the wireless the music didn't make her think of a ballroom at all. Her idea of heaven had changed. Heaven was a warm, safe place where there was love.

Diana remembered now very clearly why she had married Joe. It was because he loved her. And she loved him.

* * *

EXEUNT OMNES

P. T. Barnum, the famous circus showman, found the crowd moving along far too slowly. They would pay their money to see some attraction, and linger on and on. They were keeping out new customers.

So P. T. took down the *Exit* signs and substituted *Egress*. The public would look for this strange animal and find themselves outside.

KISSES, PIGS AND WHISTLES

"Our orders," said La Belle Victoria. "They were just—to be wicked!"

by JOHN INGLIS HALL

"ONCE I was kissed by an American general," said La Belle Victoria, *à propos* of nothing. "And he gave me ten thousand francs!"

She bridled falsely, with a delicate pretence of immodesty.

"Victoria, he got you cheap!" I said, laughing.

We were in Sancia's studio, where Victoria had just finished laying the table for a dinner which was to take place that evening. Carlo, Sancia's white cockatoo, was sitting on Victoria's shoulder, gazing in front of him with the cold, passionless stare of parrots. He coughed, a small, throaty, asthmatic cough, from the winter repertoire of the late M. Amati of the Café Suiza—who had been his owner before Sancia—and followed it up suddenly with an infamous military expletive. Then, for ten seconds, he imitated male voices laughing and talking in Spanish at a café table. He was evidently having a day of reminiscence. Victoria scolded him.

"Carlo, thou art badly brought up," she said reproachfully. "Only soldiers are allowed to use that word, because everybody knows they mean nothing by it."

The cockatoo gave a long, shrill wolf-whistle and relapsed into silence. He ruffled his neck, shook himself and started to preen his breast feathers with his black, curved beak.

"Ah! The hour of Monsieur's toilet!" exclaimed Victoria "Then thou shalt go back to thy place, monster without shame."

She picked him up in her hand and put him back on his ring perch before the window, and turned to me again.

"*Docteur*," she said, addressing me with her eyes as well as her voice, "we have a parrot worthy of us."

"I know, Victoria," I said. "But what about your American general?"

"On the same day," she continued, "Madame Sancia was kissed by a French general, but she only got a medal. There's no justice in the world."

I smiled, for I realized that she was referring to the culmination of the strange part that she and Sancia were said to have played in

Morocco before the liberation of North Africa in 1942. For a time it had made them, in a small circle, if not famous, at least notorious.

Like many legendary exploits, theirs had been exposed to a double danger—that of being lost in the turmoil of larger events, and that of being blown up to a greater size than they merited. So far, it had belonged to the first category, never having been recorded. Nevertheless, I want no knowledgeable man-on-the-spot who minded his own business and kept his eyes and ears prudently shut during that whole, momentous time, to say: "You blow the balloon too large. It contains only hot air. These things never happened. I was there, so I know." Ten years afterwards, men surely existed who were ready to declare that the Capitoline geese did not save Rome.

"Ah-h-h, *Docteur*, it was beautiful, beautiful," said Victoria, closing her eyes ecstatically. "I am a very wicked girl, and I love little wickednesses, very, very much!"

"Victoria, I know," I said. "And Madame Sancia loves little wickednesses, as you call them, too! But were they such little wickednesses, if they caused both of you to be kissed by generals?"

"In public!" replied Victoria, proudly. "In private, one may kiss generals, colonels, majors, captains, lieutenants, and even simple soldiers—but in public! That is more difficult!"

"Go on, Victoria," I said. "Enough mysteries. Why were you kissed in public? I must know."

Victoria fetched me a glass of wine and set it before me like a treasure, bending very close to me, in her most compelling manner.

"*Monsieur le Docteur* knows about it already," she said. "He mocks me!"

Nevertheless, she sat down on a stool in front of my chair and looked at me for a moment, her chin resting on her hands.

"In Morocco, some were for Vichy and some were for de Gaulle," she said. "But nearly all were for France. That was why it was so different for the British, for the Americans—and for the French."

It was an admirably shrewd small observation about the psychological situation during the months which preceded the Allied landings. The need to know the French military dispositions was there always. But more important, almost, was the need to know, among the men at the top, the weaknesses, the strengths, the divided loyalties, and to use them in order to ensure that when the blow fell—as fall everyone knew it must—there would be the maximum of confusion and the minimum of loss among those who beneath all superficial differences, were our friends.

"We were for de Gaulle and the Anglo-Americans," Victoria

continued. " Madame Sancia received her orders through Tangier and Gibraltar—and I, La Belle Victoria, helped her to carry them out."

She was proud, and pointed to her bosom with a poised, graceful forefinger as she spoke, executing at the same time a little convent curtsey.

" But our orders, *Docteur*! Ah, they were funny orders! They were just—to be wicked! To play on the important people such naughty little tricks! It was what Madame Sancia called '*la guerre psychologique*'. I do not know what that means, *Docteur*, but I know that we made many, many of the people in Morocco whom nobody liked, angry—and some good men, too, particularly among the soldiers. The poor, poor soldiers! I was sorry for them!"

" I can imagine it," I said drily. " But you still went on tormenting them?"

" Naturally, *Monsieur le Docteur*! It was our job! To torment the people who needed, above all, to think clearly and to remain calm! And to annoy the bad men and make them look foolish, if possible in public. The best of it was that most of them we knew. The worst of it was that some of them we liked."

" Cruel, cruel Victoria," I laughed. " What did you do?"

" We went often to the houses of our victims, Madame Sancia on her side, I on mine, among the Arabs. We recruited helpers. The Arabs are a people who love laughter and malice! They were easy. For the rest, among the French, there were jealousies, hatreds, passions. Madame Sancia says that in her sculpture the simplest things are the deepest. We too made small things do big work."

" For instance?" I said.

" In their houses, we had people to make the electric light fail on occasions when it was important that it should not. The failures were never simple ones: in any case, it was always the task of our people to 'help'—by making them worse. In the months before the invasion we had nearly two hundred electric light disasters in the best houses in Morocco—always on great occasions, when the ladies were in *grande toilette*. Always, too, in the darkness, favourite ornaments were broken, food was upset, walls were splashed, dresses were spoiled. It is easy to carry a tube of paint to a party, *Docteur*."

Victoria looked down demurely.

" Brutes!" I said.

She shrugged her shoulders.

" You are too kindhearted, *Monsieur le Docteur*!" she said. " You could never have done it. At one time, we had a coup at

nearly every big function, public or private, in Casablanca! There were some municipal enquiries, and even police investigations. It was no use. Who would suspect Madame Sancia and La Belle Victoria? Sometimes in the houses of the bad men, we used the preparation to put in clothes—the little powder which tickles. We dropped marbles on the ballroom floors in the dark. We scattered those terrible little globules that smell when you break them. Above all, when it concerned people who were rich but whose reputation was not perfect, we saw to it that stories about the disasters reached the papers—and those people who were not invited but thought, perhaps, that they should have been. Ah, life in the big official world in Morocco was not funny that summer!"

I was beginning to realize a little the depth and subtlety of the game: to understand Sancia's extreme reticence about her rôle before the Allied landings, which I knew had been active. Victoria had warmed to her story and her face was animated by the joyful, innocent malice of children.

"Good heavens, Victoria, how many people did you employ?" I cried, outraged by their perfidy.

"About a hundred at the height of our play," said Victoria delightedly. "Except for the last two or three days, when there were more. But, *Docteur*, *Docteur*! Best of all was the telephone—what we did with the telephone! We made false appointments for our victims, we cancelled their real appointments, we invited people out to dinner with one another, as many as ten or twelve at a time, we cancelled real dinners, we cancelled the hairdressing and beauty treatments of mothers, wives and daughters. Oh, they were mad with rage sometimes, mad!

"But remember, very few people, the ordinary people, knew anything about this—and they don't to this day. Life, ordinary life, went on as before. It was only those on our black list, the poor things, who suffered—for three whole months while, outside, the world prepared, the ships were loaded, were on their way."

I groaned from sheer pity.

"Victoria," I cried, "what a war, what a terrible war you waged! It takes women to think of such horrors in the realms of psychology."

"I do not know your psychology," said La Belle Victoria.

In spite of her ignorance of psychology, she became more demure than ever when she smiled her secret smile and continued:

"Then there were the love affairs, the intrigues of the heart! Our people were not free from them, *Docteur*, as you can imagine. We knew about them, very often, and sometimes the wrong people—wives or husbands—found out just what they should not know . . ."

I shook my head, almost shy of knowing two people so ruthless.

" But our masterpieces were surely in the last three days before the landings. There was a general—a good man but bad-tempered —I shall not tell you his name. It was necessary, at the end that he, above all others, should lack judgment. He was a great gardener. In all Casablanca, in all Morocco, there was nobody so proud of his garden. Every visitor had to see it and praise it, even if he did not know a rose from a cucumber.

" Late at night, two days before the Americans landed, I and nine others took ten little pigs—such dear, hungry, pink little pigs—and put them over the wall one by one into his locked garden and left them there. By morning, what a disaster ! It was pitiful. The poor general, ah, the poor general ! But it worked. For the next week, he was the most unreasonable man in all Africa."

Victoria laughed until she cried, her long lashes, soaked with tears, pressed on her cheeks by her closed eyelids.

" That was Madame Sancia's idea," she said at last.

" And it was for that that an American general kissed you ? " I asked. " Surely you have nothing deadlier than that ? "

" But yes, *Monsieur le Docteur*. There were the whistles ! "

" First pigs, then whistles ? You started an orchestra, Victoria ? What for ? "

" No, not exactly an orchestra," replied Victoria, exquisitely bashful, radiant with mock-diffidence. " No. We just sent a few thousand whistles into each of the principal cities—we imported them through Tangier—and had them given to the little Arab boys ! That was three days before the landings. And of course, like all little boys, they blew them all day and most of the night. But particularly, they blew them near all the military headquarters and administrations—they were told to. You cannot arrest all little Arab boys who blow whistles, can you, *Docteur* ? You cannot cut their heads off ? Of course, it could only last for three or four days at the most—the Arab fathers and mothers would see to that. But for three days ! Ah, there was whistling, much whistling. And much, much anger—everywhere."

Victoria was silent. " They both need spanking," I thought " the wicked women ! "

Ten minutes later, Sancia came in with the flowers for the dinner table.

" I've just been hearing from Victoria about your scandalous behaviour," I said sternly. Sancia kissed me on the forehead.

" Which particular scandalous behaviour was this ? " she asked. " You know that we are specialists, Jean."

I told her. She sat down beside me and took my hand in hers.

"You know that Victoria exaggerates?" she said. "Well, maybe she has exaggerated a bit this time. Of course, we did work for the Allies—and for France. Maybe we did do some of the things she has told you about. They were her great days!"

As usual, Sancia Delmas was prepared to admit practically nothing. I pressed the point.

"You admit that Victoria was kissed by an American general and given ten thousand francs, some months after the Liberation?"

Sancia smiled and nodded.

"And on the same day, you yourself were kissed by a French general and given a *Croix de Guerre*?"

"Ah, yes, Jean, but in my case it was for something very different that I never talk about—or mostly for that anyway."

"At last we're getting somewhere," I said. "Such things do not happen without cause. Sancia and Victoria, you are the most outrageous women in the world."

"But Jean, we only followed instructions—to impair judgment among high officials and the military, and yet do nobody any lasting harm! It affected very few people, you know. And they've mostly forgiven us long since—the ones who knew about it."

"And you thought it all up yourselves?"

"Of course! And it didn't cost Mr. Churchill a penny. I paid all the expenses myself. Even the whistles. Even the pigs!"

There was silence between us for a moment.

"I'm thinking of Joshua and the walls of Jericho," I said.

Sancia laughed.

"You would," she said. "In a way the comparison is good."

La Belle Victoria had stood behind us, listening as we talked.

"You see, *Docteur*," she said triumphantly, "I was speaking only the truth! We were kissed by generals—both of us!"

"Victoria, I'm not sure that you shouldn't both be spanked—by me!"

She made me a little reverence, a perfectly balanced stage bow, then turned and exposed her shapely rump to me, like a naughty schoolboy bending over a stool.

"It is as you wish, *Docteur*," she said. "But you know, for us women, at times, that also can be a pleasure. There are so many ways to a woman's heart!"

It was on this equivocal note that La Belle Victoria's war service joined the Capitoline geese in its small niche in history.

* * *

A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely rearranging their prejudices.

WILLIAM JAMES

LUCKY SHOT

"I told you I'd be good at live game—but what if I got caught?" she asked fearfully

by EDMUND WARE

THE year his old crony, Zack Bourne, married Sarah and reformed, a great loneliness fell upon Jeff Coongate, and there was no zest in illegal beaver trapping, or comfort in the bottle.

Seeking solace, he paddled up the Mopang River to visit Zack. It was a mistake. Zack had Sarah, and was contented. He declined Jeff's offer of strong drink, and showed no interest in Jeff's proposal to go salmon spearing by torchlight.

"Agin the law," said Zack.

"You talk like a game warden," brooded Jeff.

Sorrowing, the old outlaw dreamed of better days: a jug of rum, a loin of moose, and Zack beside him singing in the wilderness. Clearly the better days were dead.

At the end of his journey to Zack's cabin, Jeff had felt tired. He couldn't understand it. He wasn't quite seventy, and the trip was only twenty-nine miles. It worried him. He also thought there was a stiffness in his shoulders from paddling his canoe. What was the matter? Was he failing in life's prime?

He pondered darkly. He imagined himself roaming deep into the forest. There would be no one to see him go, or to note the faint, sad outline of his shoulder blades beneath his tattered shirt. He would sink down upon the cold ground, utter a cry of loneliness, and die in agony.

This picture of his own tragic passing wrung Jeff's heart. But, after breakfast, as he heard Sarah Bourne singing happily in the kitchen, a tide of emotion swept over him. His dramatic sense was suddenly roused. He leaned close to Zack, his one eye misting as with a vision of sanctuary.

"Zack, do you know why I come up here—all of them perilous miles through the rapids?"

"Why, to see me, didn't you?"

"Zack, I wanted you to be the first to know. I come to tell you that—that I, too, am goin' to enter into matrimony."

"No, Jeff. No! Not you. It jest ain't right."

"*You* done it."

"Yuh, but you're different. You can't, Jeff. It's your duty not to. It—why, oh, Lord, I—"

Zack's face twisted. He knew what he meant, but couldn't say it. Jeff Coongate was a man apart. He was the one-eyed poacher, the bulwark and the absolute of uncompromising bachelorhood. He was the last, lone-living, woods-roaming giant—the outlaw of Mopang Forest. Through the years, he had parried women's advances by looking over their heads with invincible hauteur.

"Jeff, it'd be desecration, like a monumint—fallen!"

Zack was sorely troubled, a reaction invariably gratifying to Jeff, who now proceeded with embellishment and detail.

"I'll rig curtains in my windows. I'll have geraniums along the sills. An' when I come home in the evenin', tired from poachin', she'll have the fire lit, Zack. She'll have food prepared for me—dainty morsils. She'll greet me, an' smile upon me in welcome. She—"

"Who, Jeff?" said Zack. "Who *is* she? Some danged squaw? A three-hundred-pounder with no teeth?"

Jeff rose, his eye glowing a baleful, imperious blue.

"Zack Bourne, you have insulted my wife."

"Can't I even ask who she is?"

Jeff had given little thought to the actual identity of his mate, but under pressure he made a bold decision.

"That girl that visits the Tethergoods every summer. She's Effie Tethergood's sister—a kind of a spirited little thing, about forty, maybe, an' able, an' han'some. I don't know her name."

"Letty Turnbuckle!" croaked Zack.

"That's her! She's in Mopang. She shall be my bride."

"But you ain't even *met* her!"

"I shall meet Miss Turnbuckle," said Jeff, on sudden inspiration, "—in *church!*"

Zack wilted. "You ain't been in church in sixty-five years!"

Zack was so miserable that Jeff's spirits fully revived. He said farewell to Zack and Sarah, and, as he paddled down river, he dwelt majestically in dreamland, and life was joy.

It did not matter to Jeff Coongate that—as yet—he wasn't dealing with the real thing. In fancy, he wooed his mate with selected words and attitudes. Kneeling, he brushed her wrist with his sinister moustaches.

"Miss Turnbuckle, I crave the honour of your hand in wedlock, an' we shall live together ever after—pavilioned in splendour."

As he pictured it, she murmured demure acceptance, and by the time Jeff hauled his canoe ashore at Mopang, she was on a pedestal, wearing fine raiment, and Jeff was waiting upon her with the grace and ardour of a knight errant.

On the following day, Jeff at last sighted Miss Turnbuckle from Stumpy Coldwillow's blacksmith's shop. She was small, and her gait reminded him of a doe's. His princess! Soon he would meet her. And Mopang would resound.

Jeff had come to the smithy to get horseshoe nails for a bracelet for his beloved. When Stumpy's back was turned, he filled his pockets with shiny new ones and stalked over to the post office and general store to see if his War pension money had arrived early. It hadn't. It never had.

"It never will," said Sam Pease, the proprietor.

"Well, gimme credit for a box of candy and a jug of Hernando's Fiery Dagger. My pension'll be in tomorrow, sure."

"Tomorrow's Sunday, old-timer," said the heartless Sam.

"Say! I forgot! *Sunday!*"

On the morrow the minister of the church stiffened in his pulpit, unnerved by the apparition which appeared without warning or precedent in the back pew. The presence of the renowned sinner was as yet unnoticed by the worshippers. The minister decided to let them discover for themselves. This was as Jeff himself had wished it. His appearance would sweep them like flame. Miss Letty would be impressed. After the service there would be an introduction—the laying of the cornerstone of married bliss.

He saw her in front. Her neck arched proudly as she sang the opening hymn in a powerful soprano.

The minister called for a second hymn. "Now, then—especially you men. I want to hear a *man's* voice."

So did Miss Turnbuckle, but neither she nor the minister was prepared for the voice they heard.

Half-way through the first verse they were met with a solo avalanche of song. The deep bass poured from the back pew like surf on a lonely shore. It seemed to express the travail of the human race—the longing of man for woman, the terrible effort to gain salvation and respite from pursuit by game wardens.

The men glanced round fearfully. They saw the towering figure of Jeff Coongate, a hymnal in his hand. Serene splendour emanated from him. His patched shirt was washed, his rope braces were freshly cut from someone's clothes line. His moustaches gave him the look of an accomplished highwayman; but, as he pealed forth the closing words of the hymn, his one eye, rolling heavenward, shone with a saintly light.

The womenfolk were as delighted as if Satan had slithered down the bell rope. Letty knew Jeff by reputation, and had yearned to meet him. Her brown eyes met his blue one. He smiled, and her heart beat zigzag.

"Effie," she whispered to her sister, "introduce me—after?"

Of all the church gathering that fateful Sunday, the most perplexed was young Tom Corn, the game warden. He admired Jeff as the most artful adversary and finest woodsman he had ever known. But this church business was a poser. Tom sensed a suppressed excitement among the womenfolk. He was baffled.

Outside after the service, Tom witnessed the introduction. He saw Letty's eyes sparkle, saw Jeff Coongate's sweeping bow. Women chattered but men stood thoughtfully apart.

"Tom, dear, isn't it thrilling?" asked his wife Edna, as they walked towards home. "I never did like that barber down in Privilege that Letty's been going with. But Jeff's just perfect for her. She—"

"Honey," Tom Corn said, "they've only just met. You talk as if they were getting married this afternoon."

"I don't believe in long engagements," Edna said.

"They're not engaged."

"Oh, Tom! Don't be so gloomy. Jeff didn't come to church to shoot a moose. I think it's nice that Letty likes the outdoors—fishing and everything. And think of the wedding we'll have!"

"I am."

"Tom Corn! Don't you want Jeff to be happy?"

As a matter of fact, Jeff Coongate was very happy indeed.

"Mr. Coongate—Jeff," Effie Tethergood had said, "I want you to meet my sister, Miss Turnbuckle—Letty."

"Hullo, Jeff," said Letty, warmly gripping his huge hand. "My, what I've heard them tell about *you!*"

A tremor ran through Jeff. He had supposed his reputation was a thing few maidens would care to mention openly. But by Monday, when he called, he had put Letty back on her pedestal.

He had procured for himself a packet of cigarettes, lest her sensibilities be offended by his chewing Old Jaw Breaker plug. And he came bearing a bouquet of wild roses wrapped in newspaper.

"Picked 'em a-purpose, jest for you," he said.

"Oh, Jeff! Wild roses! So romantic!"

"Would you care to pin one in your hair—Letty?"

"That depends," she murmured, pinning on a rose as requested. Jeff bent and sniffed the blossom. Letty's eyes warmed. Jeff sighed, and lit a cigarette. It was a moment of rapture.

"Jeff, do those cigarettes come like dead men—just one to a packet?"

He gave her a cigarette. As he held the match, a petal fell from the rose in her hair. The omen was like a stone in Jeff's breast. His princess was inhaling deeply; she was smoking, and he felt the dark discrepancy between dream and reality.

Finally Jeff rose with the idea of courteous leave-taking. He was

thwarted by the arrival of two matrons of Mopang.

"Why, Jeff!" said Mrs. Tom Corn. "How nice to find you here! Letty, you look just blooming. And a rose in your hair!"

"Callin' on Letty, Jeff?" asked Mrs. Stumpy Coldwillow. "My, my! Come, Edna. We'll go and find Effie, an' leave these two lovebirds together—ha-ha!"

Jeff longed for a numbing draft of Hernando's, and Zack Bourne bellowing in his ear: "You danged fool. They've *got* you!"

But Letty Turnbuckle, her hand eagerly pressing his, was melting him with her pleading voice: "Take me fishing some day, will you, Jeff? Please, Jeff? When?"

The fishing trip was but one of a series of revelations as Jeff rolled inevitably towards destruction. Letty did not sit in the bow of his canoe, a wan hand trailing water lilies over the side. She fished! And without a licence! And she caught the most and the largest, and spoke disparagingly of game laws. It wasn't ladylike!

The progress of Jeff's courtship was tensely watched by the citizens of Mopang, the men commenting in part, as follows, "He was at the Grange supper with her last night." "I seen him drinkin'—*tea!*"

"He's bought a glass eye," noted Stumpy Coldwillow, despairingly. "He was at church agin, too."

The womenfolk, on the other hand, were ecstatic. They gave picnics for the sweethearts, and exchanged news and views:

"She was over at his shack till nine o'clock last night!"

"He's asked her! She told me. She's accepted!"

A series of episodes had led to the presentation of the bracelet. One was the hideous nightmare which Jeff had suffered. In the nightmare, he and Letty were married and living in Jeff's shack. Writhing in his tortured sleep, he saw Letty coming home with a rifle in her hand and a deer slung across her shoulders. "Quick, Jeff! Hide it! The game wardens are after me," she said.

"Why, Letty dear, you shouldn't of done that—that poor li'l forrist creature," Jeff had said to her. "Now, there—you've lost a button off your trousers. Come here, I'll sew it on for you."

"Gimme a swig of rum," Letty had said. "My nerves—Tom Corn almost got me."

"Here, dear," Jeff had said, filling a jelly glass with the rum. "Now, if you're going to the store, will you get me a packet of needles, some thread, an' a jar of face cream?"

"Sure, Jeff. But I want my supper first. What have you got on the stove?"

He had awakened from the nightmare in a cold sweat, crying

aloud for Zack Bourne and freedom. He then planned the picnic to Nine Echo Pond, a fearsome and darkling place where moose roamed and loons called eerily. The trip was a triumph for Jeff. The dark cliffs round the pond flung echoes in tangled confusion.

"Oh, Jeff! This is a scary place."

"Not with me by your side. Sh-sh-sh. Look—a moose—a yearlin' bull!"

The creature stepped into the water not forty yards from them. Letty clutched Jeff's arm and held it tight.

"I'll bet you've shot a lot like that one?"

"Hundrids," Jeff modestly admitted.

As they walked back towards the canoe, Jeff saw the admiration in her eyes; and, as he drew the bracelet from his pocket, his princess was almost real.

"Letty—may I call you 'dear'?—will, er, will you receive this bracelit as—as a tokin of our betrothil?"

"Oh, Jeff! It's a beauty! Did you make it?"

"Yuh," he said, his throat constricting with emotion, "them horseshoe nails is pure silver. My father give 'em to my poor ol' mother a long, long time ago. I've saved 'em—for this momint!"

He kissed Letty on the cheek and fled for the canoe. He was beset with dark terror. He was engaged to be married!

A date was set for September. Jeff had suggested a small wedding and Letty had agreed. But by late August it appeared that the entire populations of Mopang, Privilege and Boomchain Junction would attend.

Jeff did not know that groups of men were meeting on his behalf, muttering: "We got to do somethin' about ol' Jeff. We got to help him." Zack Bourne had been enlisted, and his respected enemy, game warden Tom Corn, had rallied to the cause.

The old outlaw might never have realized the seriousness of his plight if it hadn't been for the afternoon a few days before the wedding when Letty came to his shack and asked to see his rifles. Her interest in these weapons was strangely disturbing. She immediately wanted to try one. His nightmare leaped into his mind.

"No, Letty—don't touch that one," he said, gently removing his celebrated .45-70 from her grasp.

In dread that she might actually prove to be a skilled marksman, he offered her a shot-out .30-30 with a slight sweep in the barrel caused by clubbing a bear.

"You'll like this one," he said. "It's light, an' shoots perfick."

He loaded it for her, and she fired at a tin can. The bullet sheered off three feet to the left.

"Oh, dear!"

"Try that old crate."

The bullet churned gravel to the right. Letty was on the verge of tears. "What'll you think of me now?" she sniffled.

He didn't know what to think; he just patted her shoulder. She turned towards him, brightening.

"Jeff! I know what's wrong. It's shooting at *targets.* I'd be all right on real game!"

Forebodings were thick in Jeff's mind. She wanted to shoot a deer, and it was the close season. Had his nightmare been *real?*

"No, Letty," he said. "The law's on deer."

"Who said anything about a deer? *I'm talking about that moose,* Jeff! Take me back to Nine Echo Pond."

Jeff had gone grey to the teeth. Didn't she know there hadn't been an open season for moose in thirty years?

"Letty, it's agin the law. It—it's poachin'," said Jeff, in shocked tones.

She lovingly caressed the .30-30, while Jeff, who had many times felt the long arm of the moose law, tried to redeem her.

"Ladies don't shoot moose. They don't do bad things."

"You mean I'm not a lady? You mean I'm bad?"

"Letty, no, but it—it *hurts* me."

"You don't love me! Oh, oh, oh!"

Inevitably, two days before the wedding date, the moose of Nine Echo Pond fell dead. Letty ejected the smoking shell from her rifle and called Jeff.

"Oh, Jeff! I—I—I got him! Oh, what have I done?"

"You've shot a moose," he said, reaching her side. And he looked upon her, his heart sorrowing, for he knew it was the end between them, and loneliness descended on him—as the scheme for escape took shadowy form in his mind.

Letty was crying. "What do I do now, Jeff?" she asked.

"It's your first moose," he said, sadly, "so we dig out the bullit for a souvenir. Where'd you hit him?"

"There—right at the back of his ear. Did it hurt him, Jeff?"

"He never knowed a thing."

"I told you I'd be good at live game, didn't I, Jeff? But—but what if I got caught?" she asked, fearfully.

"I've been wonderin' about that, Letty."

Later Jeff packed his knapsack: salt pork, flour, dry matches. Then, with pencil and a piece of wrapping paper, he sat down to compose his masterpiece.

"Dere Letty, in solutary grief I write to tell you that Tom Corn has discovered the moose on Nine Echo Pond, an knows you done it, someone must of seen you an informed, an I cannot have them think sech a thing of my belovid an so I turn the blame upon myself by

flight from this country of my childhood forever to roam afar the wilds.

" My heart is broke to fragmints an I do not want you to suffer, so I go. I will write the game warden confessin the fell deed. My shoulders will bear the burdin of guilt an blame an your fair name will never receive blot because of the moose of Nine Echo Pond.

" To remember me sometimes is all I ask in return, an as a tokin I want you should have the rifle you done it with, its hangin on the pegs above the door to this home wich was to be ours but wich I must fersake forever. Farewell. Yrs Trly,

" Thos. J. Coongate, Esq."

Jeff left the letter on the table, blew out the lamp, and stalked into the night. He had gone but a short distance when he realized he had forgotten his jug of Hernando's Fiery Dagger.

But as he approached his shack, he saw a light flickering in the window. He crept forward soundlessly and peered through a window. Tom Corn, with a torch, was inside. In another moment, the game warden would read the farewell note. Letty would be convicted of poaching!

Jeff started a dash for the cabin door. He must conceal the note before Tom Corn read it. But he checked himself and crouched, grinning in the darkness. Jeff had just thought of a scheme!

While Tom read the note, and stowed it in the breast pocket of his uniform, the old outlaw lurked in the darkness, basking in the sunshine of his genius. He would match wits with the law and matrimony at the same time!

He stepped into his shack. " Hullo, Tom," he said.

Tom whirled, startled. " Why, Jeff! Thought you—thought you'd gone away."

" What made you think that, son?"

Tom said nothing. Did Jeff think Letty had already taken the note, and that he, Tom Corn, didn't know about it?

" Got a warrant to search my shack, Tom?" asked Jeff.

" No, I—I wasn't searching, Jeff. I came to see you. Some others comin' too. It just happened I got here first."

Presently Stumpy Coldwillow and Zack Bourne appeared.

" Jeff, ol' pal! We're goin' on a little trip—to Chancery Lake. Me an' you, together. 'Twas Tom Corn's idea."

Jeff realized what was afoot; and it fitted in nicely with his plans.

" Chancery Lake? That'd take three weeks."

" Danged right, Jeff! An' won't come back till she—Letty's gone away. We're *savin'* you, Jeff."

He gazed loftily upon them, withering them with the light from his eye. " I shall be married the day after tomorrow. I'll

thank you men to leave my home, an' never darkin my door agin."

They were crushed. They had been certain that, with Zack loose from Sarah, Jeff would have leaped at the chance to escape.

"Go!" intoned the one-eyed poacher.

Silently they shuffled past him, and the last to go was young Tom Corn who paused to exchange a stare of classic wariness. Then Tom said, "So long, Jeff. I'll be seein' you—in church."

Jeff savoured to the full the tortures to which he was putting Tom Corn. Tom's sense of duty would drive him. He must arrest the bride, on her wedding day, in the face of every woman in Mopang. He couldn't make the arrest the day before the wedding. He would have to make the trip to Nine Echo Pond first, in order to examine the evidence. Never had the one-eyed poacher dreamed of a sweeter revenge.

But there was a ghastly moment in church, with the congregation waiting for the fatal words of wedlock, when the old outlaw's legs nearly gave way. Had Tom outfoxed him?

Those strange, insincere wedding tears were already appearing in the womenfolks' eyes. The strains of the harmonium had died away, and the minister had started the service. Letty, by Jeff's side, was shooting out answers in powerful affirmatives.

Jeff's lips were dry, but there was an icy dampness on his brow. Would Tom Corn never come? Was this delay a trap? A final act of treachery from the game wardens of life?

Looking desperately into the sea of faces, Jeff caught Zack's eye in a single heartrending glance. He was all but married, when the game wardens arrived—three of them, besides Tom Corn.

Tom himself was a little white about the lips. Besides the trip to Nine Echo Pond, there had been other details. He had been in long and earnest counsel with Judge Beeswater about the legality of the thing, and the judge at length had conceded a point or two, on the grounds that the emergency was greater than the law. Then Tom had enlisted the three other game wardens for moral support, and they had arrived in the nick of time—for the ceremony had reached that knee-buckling point where the minister asked:

"If any man can show just cause why they may not lawfully be joined together, let him now speak—"

And Tom Corn spoke.

"I am here to arrest Miss Letitia Turnbuckle. I accuse her of killing a moose. I have evidence to prove it."

The bride paled. Jeff Coongate placed his corded arm round Letty's shoulder, and eyed the game wardens as from a high mountain. Then he left Letty and strode towards them ominously.

"Warden Corn," he said, "you are insultin' my wife."

"I am accusing Letty," said Tom, "as stated."

"You have accused her falsely, son," Jeff Coongate said. "I killed that moose on Nine Echo Lake. I hereby take full blame an' guilt."

"Then you'd better come with me, Jeff."

"You're breakin' up my marriage—on account of a moose?"

"I mean you're under arrest."

"But every smirch an' blemish will be removed from my bride's fair name? Very well, warden. I'll come quiet."

Jeff turned to whisper in Letty's ear, and to pat her hand. Then he swept the gathering with a glance of cosmic martyrdom, and led the little file of wardens towards the gaol.

The effect on the hamlet of Mopang was harrowing. Women gathered round Letty to comfort her, and there was stern weeping far into the night, and even into the next day. The men invaded Sam Pease's store, and Sam gave credit for rum to one and all; a great roaring was heard in the street, and proclamations of undying friendship. Rifles were fired in honour of Tom Corn.

During this celebration, Sarah Bourne approached Zack, who was carrying two strange men on his shoulders, and begged him to desist; and, to his revered wife, Zack said, "I ain't goin' up river till I'm ready, an' if supper ain't on the table when I git home, there'll be a row, an' if it is, I won't eat a bite."

Tom Corn's Edna took her two children and a suitcase and went to her mother's in Boomchain Junction, but Tom enjoyed a popularity among males that few game wardens have ever experienced. Edna came home after a week, to say forgivingly:

"Jeff Coongate is no husband for Letty, Tom. He—he *perjured* himself. You know Letty really shot the moose."

"I know, honey," Tom said.

"So it *was* courageous of you to prevent the marriage, Tom."

"Maybe, honey—but it wasn't right. I mean, the law—I'm kind of sick about that."

"But, Tom, poaching isn't really like breaking a real law, is it?"

Tom bent and kissed his beloved. He humbly said, "Edna—I'm a game warden."

But Edna had no concern with these narrow distinctions.

"Tom, did you hear? Letty's gone down to New Wampum. An old friend of hers wrote her, after he heard the news about the—the wedding. He's a grain salesman, and he's got an automobile."

"Yuh?" said Tom, distractedly.

It was a bit more than a month later when *The Northwoods Axeman*, the weekly paper, announced the nuptials of Miss Letty Turnbuckle and Amos Osgood, and the piece said that the happy

couple were going to live in Canada. After a conference with Judge Beeswater, Tom Corn walked down to the Mopang gaol one September afternoon, and said to Jeff Coongate:

"Old-timer, you're free."

"Free, Tom? Me? How? I got about five months to go."

"Jeff, dang you, Letty's married, an' goin' to live in Canada. We can't touch her there. I can't hold you any longer—for a moose you didn't kill."

Jeff rose and glowered at the game warden. "Mean to say I committed perjury, son? Mean to say the woman I was to marry killed that moose? You've insulted her again, Tom!"

The young warden turned and left the gaol door open, and a moment later, from behind a building, he saw the one-eyed poacher striding forth into sunshine and freedom . . .

And in blessed bachelorhood, three days later, the one-eyed poacher sat with Zack Bourne and a jug of rum, a pan of trout, underneath a dripping cedar, singing in the rain, and wilderness was Paradise enow, especially since the season on trout had closed.

"Lord, Jeff, but you come turrible close to matrimony. Jest supposin' you'd really got hitched to Letty—an' her a poacher!"

"Zack! You accusin' that lovely girl of poachin'?"

"Hah-hah! She shot a moose, didn't she?"

The old outlaw withdrew from his pocket the souvenir bullet—the one that had struck the moose of Nine Echo Pond behind the ear. He tossed it to Zack, who examined it with increasing awe.

"Jeff! That bullit's big as my thumb. It's from your .45-70."

"I stood jest to her left," the one-eyed poacher said meekly, "about fifty yards away. I shot about the time she did. I seen her bullit from that sway-barriled .30-30 knock the top off a hemlock nine foot over the moose."

"You mean she didn't *know*?"

"No. Them echoes amongst the cliffs sounded like four earthquakes."

"An' Tom Corn let you free! He don't *know*!"

But Jeff wasn't listening. He was brooding. "Letty was a fine girl, Zack. She was a princess! I couldn't let her shoot a moose. It would've been poachin'."

* * *

LAST RESORT

"I rather like bad wine," said Mr. Mountchesney; "one gets so bored with good wine."

BENJAMIN DISRAELI, *Sybil*

ALL'S FAIR . . .

But love has never known a law
Beyond its own sweet will!

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER

" The game's going on rather better now," Alice said, by way of keeping up the conversation a little.

" 'Tis so," said the Duchess : " and the moral of that is—Oh, 'tis love, 'tis love, that makes the world go round ! "

LEWIS CARROLL, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

Hold It a Fashion—

Now fie on foolish love, it not befits
Or man or woman know it.
Love was not meant for people in their wits,
And they that fondly shew it
Betray the straw, and feathers in their braine,
And shall have Bedlam for their paine :
If single love be such a curse,
To marry is to make it ten times worse.

FRANCIS BEAUMONT, 1584-1616

Forward—

She had two preliminary objects—an eye to catch, an eye to avoid. The first belonged to her neighbour, the second to the waiter ; and she succeeded in both, for the *terrasse* was so crowded that an inactive client could easily escape attention, and Mr. Rickaby—such was the prosperous gentleman's name—had attention to spare . . .

" Waiting for someone ? " he asked.

Julia twisted her mouth and shrugged. Instinctively she had pitched on exactly the right line—a slightly mournful cynicism such as Mr. Rickaby would enjoy dispelling. She was almost certain he was a man who liked to do good.

" What you want," said Mr. Rickaby, " is a drink."

" Thanks," said Julia indifferently. She felt it was still too early for a gleam of gratitude, so she turned three-quarter face—not profile, because of the plumpness under her chin—and stared into the distance, and let him have a good look at her. Mr. Rickaby evidently appreciated what he saw, for when the drinks came he at once stated his intentions.

"Our eyes have met," quoted Mr. Rickaby softly, "our lips not yet—here's hoping. You by yourself here?"

"At the moment," said Julia.

"But not for long," suggested Mr. Rickaby.

Julia shrugged her shoulders.

"I'm alone in Aix," she said. "And I haven't any luggage, and I haven't a bean. So hope is just what I need . . ."

"Tell me all about it," said Mr. Rickaby. "Tell me how you came here."

"With Lucien," said Julia.

"Lucien?"

"The dress designer," said Julia. How, she could not tell, but this sinister figure had at that very instant sprung fully-fledged from her brain. Lucien, the designer . . . a man about fifty; tall, heavy, with narrow coffee-coloured eyes . . .

"Never heard of him," said Mr. Rickaby, evidently with pride. "Some dago chap?"

"Armenian," corrected Julia. "Lucien is just the trade-name."

"Armenian! My God!" said Mr. Rickaby.

Julia sighed her agreement.

"You can't trust them," she said sombrely.

"And he's left you planted here?"

Julia gulped.

"This morning—when we were leaving the hotel—there was another woman in the car . . . someone he'd just picked up. A very tall ash-blonde, with dark eyebrows."

"I believe I've seen her about," said Mr. Rickaby.

For a moment Julia was quite startled by her own powers.

MARGERY SHARP, *The Nutmeg Tree*

Not Permanent—

Darling, tell me—
I am not jealous—
But I only wish to know—
If you really walked
Alone through the rain
With your umbrella,
How it is that your left sleeve
Is quite wet
The while your right one
Is dry as Summer weather?

GONNOSKÉ KOMAI,
Fuji-Yama and Other Poems

Sweet, Not Lasting—

I . . . turned into St. Dunstan's Church, where I heard an able sermon; and stood by a pretty, modest maid, whom I did labour to take by the hand; but she would not, but got further and further from me; and, at last, I could perceive her to take pins out of her pocket to prick me if I should touch her again—which, seeing, I did forbear. And then I fell to gaze upon another pretty maid; and I did go about to take her by the hand, which she suffered a little, and then withdrew. So the sermon ended, and the church broke up, and my amours ended also.

SAMUEL PEPYS, *Diary*
18th August, 1667

The Perfume—

Against this darkness there is still the rose
to light the shadows of my silent room,
as fresh and lovely as its tender fellows
along the dark branch of an April stream.
For, like the wild-rose and those rarer flowers
that live in green perfection in the west,
she takes her beauty delicate in air
yet has a longer date than they to last.

Her hair in darkness smells like daffodils
rain-swept by the Spring winds, her lips are fresh
as first wild strawberries in early woods,
her dress like bluebell haze among the trees.
She is not here, the dry winds blow my words,
yet still her flowers shall hold my memory.

JOHN BAYLISS

—And Suppliance of a Minute

Their life now began to acquire a routine. Fabrice dined with her every night in the flat . . . and stayed with her until seven o'clock the following morning. "J'ai horreur de coucher seul," he said. At seven he would get up, dress, and go home, in time to be in his bed at eight o'clock, when his breakfast was brought in. He would have his breakfast, read the newspapers, and, at nine, ring up Linda and talk nonsense for half an hour, as though he had not seen her for days.

"Go on," he would say, if she showed any signs of flagging. "Allons, des histoires!"

NANCY MITFORD, *The Pursuit of Love*

CRICKETER'S GLORY

Gauvinier was superstitious—and in a way I didn't very much like

by HUGH DE SÉLINCOURT

GAUVINIER was always a superstitious dog; not in a nice, ordinary, sensible way like most of us, who dislike to see the new moon through glass or to walk under a ladder or sit down thirteen at table: but in his own rather peculiar way: attractive, if you liked him: annoying, most annoying, if you didn't. It was too queer and mystical, almost religious, if you understand me, inferring the existence of powers other than human, and yet not naming them, not specifying them; leaving it all in the air.

"Well, there it is. What about it?" he'd say. "Queer, at any rate, isn't it?" And he'd open his hands as no Englishman does and shrug his shoulders, his whole long expressive body one vibrant expressive question mark. You had to agree, it was queer.

And nothing was queerer than this his last game of cricket, certainly the last game in 1930, probably the last in his life. If I had been writing a cricket yarn (and I have written one or two) I should have been obliged to tone the thing down, if you understand, to make it credible: this last game of his was a little too good to be true. However, I vouch for the truth of this story; everyone in Tillingfold will vouch for it too. Ask anyone.

I happened to be in the Black Rabbit on Monday evening when Gauvinier came striding in (the beggar's always in a hurry, somehow) for the selection committee which met at eight. He looked worried, startled, and more tense even than usual.

"Hallo!" he called out to Sam Bird. "No one here yet, then?"

Sam Bird placed his glass of beer on the table and said slowly: "Good evening, captain. No. There seems a slight tardiness, if I may say so, on the part of the members of our selection committee."

And he chuckled ponderously. Sam always enjoys proofs of the imperfection of this imperfect world of ours.

Gauvinier ordered a double brandy and, fidgeting nervously, at length said to me: "Oh! come on: let's wait in the other room. Come on, Sam," and stalked off into the billiard-room. I waited for old Sam to push himself out from behind his marble-topped table and followed him into the billiard-room, where Gauvinier was

sitting by the window. We sat by him. The silence was thick and awkward.

At length Gauvinier leaned forward and said, smiling without much fun in his smile : " I've rather bad news, I'm afraid : damned bad so far as I am concerned. We've been swindled out of practically all our money. We've got to let the place. Clear out. Next Saturday will be my last game of cricket for many a long day."

Sam Bird turned slowly round and stared. I felt devilish uncomfortable.

Sam slowly recovered speech and, finding difficulty in enunciating each word, said : " I trust things may turn out to be better than they now seem."

" No : small hope of that, I fear : the bottom's out of the bucket."

And as he told us briefly of the American share-pushers' ingenious activities it seem more than likely that it was.

He ended up : " Upon my soul, it's more like an Edgar Wallace novel than real life. Anyhow, it boshes up cricket for me : we don't quite know where we shall be or what we shall do."

Gloom descended on us. Sam Bird's face visibly reddened.

" That's the worst piece of news I've heard for a long time," he said. " Yes, for a very . . . very long time."

" Bad for the club," I said.

" Oh well ! " Gauvinier laughed. " Rotten for me. As for the club, a change is always good. I'd become a sort of habit, don't you know, that was a nuisance and yet couldn't be broken. It's snapped now all right. Probably the best thing that could have happened."

" You'll be missed," said the staunch Sam.

It was getting a little too painful. Gauvinier had been skipper for pretty well ten years and had always been dead keen. I was glad when he broke the extreme discomfort of the moment by saying : " Well, no one else seems likely to turn up. Let's get on with it." He pulled out a pencil and paper. " Lord ! What luck for me. That this last game should be the best."

For we were playing the General's team, which is always the game of the season. This game was crucial, too, among that series of games, for as Sam Bird, ever an authority on statistics, begged leave to point out, eight matches had been played between the General's team and the village, of which each side had won four. Also we had won that season every match to date, and the wish not to be beaten was exceedingly strong.

" Pray for a fine day ! " said Gauvinier, writing down a list of names. " Pretty decent side we've got this year."

" We'll need 'em, too," chuckled Sam. " If what I am informed is true." His voice went up in its scale as he lifted his head to add almost perkily, rubbing his hands together with satisfaction :

" I am informed that the General has some pretty useful players turning out for him—some pretty useful players."

" Pray that it's a fine day," Gauvinier repeated, and actually consented to have another small brandy with me: he's queer in his drinking as in most other things.

" How's that for a side ? " he asked. " Any change to suggest ? "

Two or three men were discussed: one change agreed upon.

" Lord ! " he said, tipping down his brandy. " I would like to take a wicket or two ; and hit one more six."

There was considerable talk in the village, as you can imagine, about the ill fortune which had fallen upon the Gauviniers. Nice quiet people, the Gauviniers, generally liked. His immense keenness on cricket was remembered: his failings forgotten. Matches he'd pulled out of the fire came back to us: matches he'd lost by keeping himself on to bowl too long were forgotten.

Unthinkable, if after winning every match during the season, this last game—the crucial one, too, in the General's series—should be lost. Unthinkable. Feeling about it ran high.

I went up to see him during the week—on Thursday evening, as a matter of fact. He'd been twice up to town on business: and if ever a man looked bothered, he did. Something more than finance was preying on his mind.

I said to him: " You've *got* to come off on Saturday."

" Not a dog's chance, my dear chap ! By rights I shouldn't play at all. This sort of thing shows a man up. See. A proper firm-lipped, big-chinned white man would bow to the burden, shoulder it, and march steadily forward."

He laughed and peered into me with his intense eyes.

" I'm more like a stoated rabbit. A bundle of nerves. Every bush, every flower in this blasted place seems to have rooted in my heart. But, anyhow, I shall play on Saturday, though I shall be a passenger and nothing more. Must have one more game."

We sat down in front of the house in the setting sun, on the brick pavement, the light playing on a mass of roses rambling over a pergola—a lovely sight: and he talked.

I am always interested, gripped rather, when Gauvinier talks. Words pour from him: every word means something to him, and means it so intensely, that you are momentarily convinced it must mean something to you, too, and nod out emphatic *Yes-quite-wells* to his *You-see-what-I-means ?*, swept along by his queer intensity.

I came away after about an hour of it, my head reeling with his talk. Cricket, poetry, life, what mattered in life—money, love, affection, what *was* spiritual, what *was* material: how in one sense nothing mattered, how in another the littlest, most insignificant

action might catch the light of, be the symbol of, all that was mightiest and most important: he believed in luck less than ever.

"But you mark my words, the end isn't written to this chapter yet. Queer things have always happened in my life. Queer things always will happen to me. Cricket's only a game, I know: and it's physically impossible I could come off—but if I did . . . And, anyhow, I'll enjoy that game, however much of a fool I may make of myself. Aha! the whole game of life. Fail or not fail."

I shall not soon forget the way he said, so that the mockery on his face seemed to add to his seriousness: "Underneath are the everlasting arms, don't you know!"

He might have been laughing at pietism, or he might have been laughing at his impertinence for supposing a supernatural power minded one way or the other what happened to any little newt in his pond. That was his way of being superstitious. He never would be definite: left it hanging in the air. Take it or leave it. How shall I put it? Rather as though there *were* a wind, if you kept your sails taut and had a direction.

Well, the weather was all right. Hot. Hot sun in a cloudless sky. No wind. A perfect day for a game of cricket. One of the few days on which you knew it could not rain—even in England.

I was on the ground early and helped Bliss to open up the shutters of the pavilion. The whole ground was smiling in the still sunshine. Sam Bird turned up in his best suit in honour of the game. I helped him rummage the stumps out of the locker, and strolled out into the hot sun to watch him knock them into the ground. It looked a fairly decent wicket, in spite of the dry spell.

Players began to turn up—Ballard, Jimmie Harrison, Jack (our spot boy), and Freddie Winthrop, who hoped that Ted Griffith, who worked at a distance, would manage to be in time.

"This lot always turn up to the tick. Blessed if that isn't the first car-load of 'em now! Where's our old bloke? Stuck on the road with a puncture, likely as not. Fuming. What a life!"

More of the visitors arrived. Paget-Wilson, young Farringdon and old Farringdon (like him to turn up, though he was not able to play). The old skipper was there: these had played in every match since the series started: gave the side its character. There were other familiar faces, and some new ones, but I was glad not to see among them their Spofforth and to hear this year they were weak in bowling. "After the first two . . ." the old skipper said, and laughed in despair. "However, our batting's sound and we've a first-class stumper. Also I intend to win the toss."

Gauvinier joined us, laughing: explaining the crucial nature of the present game in the series to the old skipper.

"The ninth game! So many as that! I suppose it must be.

Well, it's a jolly good job, then, that I'm going to win the toss."

"Call and see!" laughed Gauvinier, tossing the coin.

"A head!"

"Of course it is! And we'll bat."

As they walked off I heard him say to Gauvinier: "This bad news. I hope it's not true."

"True enough and foul. Better not think of it."

And he hurried off to tell the team the toss had been lost and they must take the field. He came hurrying back, however, in a moment to say: "Tea, I suppose, when it's ready and draw at seven. Good. Or half-past six, if there's nothing to it."

As Tillingfold went out into the field, there were already more spectators on the ground than are wont to watch an ordinary game. The band, too, were arriving in their neat uniforms—an impressive sight. There was even a sprinkling of gentry on their allotted chairs, giving life to a stretch of the ground, usually deserted except by small boys who, if the game on the square lagged, would start their own in that far corner.

The field was set: the batsmen were making their way to the wicket. And the game began.

I believe I remember every ball bowled in that game.

Ballard started the bowling with Gauvinier: a maiden over each. I was sitting on a bench by the hedge behind Gauvinier's arm and noticed with glee that he was bowling well: once he had his man guessing, once shaved the off stump. Tillingfold are always a keen fielding side—this afternoon they were trembling on the tips of their toes: simply tugging at the leash: a good sight. Dick Culvert at point stretched out and stopped a beauty.

In Ballard's second over his fourth ball jumped in from the off, hit the batsman's glove: Gauvinier ran five yards, stretched a long arm out, got his fingers to it and no more, and dropped as pretty a catch as anyone might like to hold. It was good to have reached it; another couple of inches and he would have held it.

Runs began to come, all from one man, who had a good shot past cover, just out of young Jack's reach, and a better shot to leg, clean off the leg stump. The runs came off Gauvinier, though he was bowling decently, three twos and a one. Ballard bowled two maiden overs to the man Gauvinier had missed, who seemed in no hurry to open his score. He didn't poke about: he often hit the ball quite hard: but it always went to a fieldsman.

Gauvinier spoke to Ted Griffith, who urged him to keep on bowling; but he told me afterwards he was too dog-tired to bowl: his legs nearly gave way under him from lack of sleep.

He went mid-on and Freddie Winthrop took Ted Griffith's

place at mid-off and long-leg. In his next over Ballard put down a beauty, which came in a foot from the off and removed the leg-bail. The outgoing batsman had made all the runs.

16—1—16.

A really good batsman had been beaten by a really good ball, and Redman, although he had made no runs yet, was obviously full of confidence too after his good luck.

Paget-Wilson came in next: one of the cleanest hitters I have ever seen. He has often taken the deuce of a lot of runs off us.

"It's a treat to watch this bloke bat," Ted Griffith said to Gauvinier. "I hate to see him get out. I do, straight. He's the prettiest bat as has ever played on this ground. Lovely."

"Well, yes. That's true. But still—"

"Mind you, of course I'll do my best to get him out."

Ted Griffith is shortish, and bowls a surprisingly fast ball which is apt to get up quickly. There was no sign as he bowled his first ball of any altruistic intention to encourage an exhibition of delightful batting. His face looked fierce as after a gentle run he flung himself with sudden venom into his delivery. A good-length ball, bail high, just off the leg stump.

Paget-Wilson stopped it somehow, not liking it at all and saying so: those within hearing laughed. Everyone liked him. His good humour was so infectious that it would be difficult to imagine an unpleasant incident occurring in any game in which he was playing. The next ball, shorter and faster, he was glad to jump back from and not touch. There was a smile on Ted's grim little face. The next was a yorker, which Paget-Wilson smothered, pleased, as though there were hope for him yet if he could come down in time on a brute like that. But the fourth ball came sizzling in from the off, hit his glove, and was nicely caught by Ballard at short slip. The cries of "Bad luck, sir," were genuine.

17—2—0.

And if it hadn't been for a missed catch, 17—3, but it was no good thinking of that, though I know Gauvinier did.

Young Farringdon came in next. He opened strongly, putting Ted away to leg and driving him: he watched Ballard, however, not liking his break and change of pace. Redman, too, began to score more freely. The score mounted.

Gauvinier rested, went on again for Ted, whose shock attack was exhausted, and changed from mid-on to slips. His first over was a maiden: two balls beat Redman and missed the wicket. You could see the old beggar was simply pining to hit the stumps again. Young Farringdon took one off Ballard's first ball, and off the next Redman flicked the ball straight into Gauvinier's hands at short slip. The ball hit him on the chest and fell to the ground without

apparently touching his hands at all. I stared, sick at heart. I knew how he must be feeling. Too dismal.

He bowled two good balls, then two long hops, smitten for a couple each, a half-volley on the leg, swept for four. Not his day. He went back to mid-on. Ted bowled again.

Yet the whole side were more on their toes than ever. Their keenness increased. Dick Culvert at point, always good, had never fielded better—Freddie Winthrop, Jimmie Harrison, Alec John, young Jack and Sid Smith—it was a pleasure to watch them. Upon my soul, you could feel their sickness at the skipper making a fool of himself. A passenger is he today? All right, we're glad to take him along. You could swear their manner showed some such trend of thought.

Old Gauvinier noticed at any rate. He told me so. Said he was almost glad he'd come such a mucker that day; but that was going a little too far: two catches dropped, and the worst over he'd ever bowled. No, no. That was a bit too thick.

"Proves that I was blear-eyed and knock-kneed, anyhow? Useless by myself: physically useless?"

I agreed to that. I should have, even without his almost terrifying insistence upon it.

And runs came. Redman, let off twice, scored faster than young Farringdon, who slowed down. He never potters and pats, but plays hard each shot, as the fieldsmen to whom his shots went noticed: especially Jimmie Harrison and Alec John.

Thirty went up: forty went up. It looked as though these two were in for a big stand, as they neared the fifty, when Ballard, who was keeping a lovely length and having foul luck (not to mention the two dropped catches) in shaving the stumps, got home at last with his fast one, that nipped in from the off and smashed up young Farringdon's wicket, to a roar of applause.

48—3—10.

The lull that follows a new man's entry lasted longer than usual. The batting slowed down. It was a case of pull devil, pull baker, for the new man got most of the bowling and he remained a dark horse.

Then off one of Ted's few really bad balls, a shocking long hop to leg, Alec John brought off a pretty catch, and the new man, so far as I was concerned, remained a dark horse. But anyhow, I was glad to see the back of him.

59—4—4.

Followed in the son of a man who had played first-class cricket in his day, a bowler with an action as perfect as that of Barnes. Style and tradition marked every shot. He knew the state of the game, and left it to Redman to make the runs: and Redman made

them. He was batting with perfect freedom and confidence, when he stepped out to drive Ted Griffith, was a shade late, and drove the ball hard back into the bowler's hands—a lovely catch which made Ted grin with pleasure, and the spectators shout their joy.

And the band, in full blast, was playing a mournful dance.

73—5—34.

And seventy-three took some making on our ground, where the length of the grass turned many a good four into two or a miserable one. Old Gauvinier was staring at the score-board—34 and missed twice before he scored five.

Father and son were batting together now, and young Jack was bowling in place of Ballard, who had bowled unchanged till then beautifully, but with infernal luck. This first over was a maiden, but the boy in his second over, seeing that his father was a bit shaky and feeling that he'd better start making some runs, let drive at one of his legs, but not coming out quite far enough lofted it and was neatly caught by Ballard, who had taken young Jack's place at deep mid-wicket.

78—6—6.

Two wickets fell quickly, clean-bowled, the first by young Jack, the second by Ted; and the spectators showed by their cheers that they thought the innings as good as finished. 82 for 8.

I wasn't so sure. A tutor who often went in first when we played the college—the very devil of a man to shift—was batting; and I didn't like the look of number ten who strode in to join him, the first-class stumper we had heard mentioned: a tall and powerful fellow. He shaped horribly well at his first few balls; but the tutor got most of the bowling for a while, and was playing with extreme caution, proving to me that number ten was a hitter. They each took a single to leg off Ted, who was bowling well, when it came—two quick little steps forward, a lash, and number ten watched the ball soaring into the road for six: well over the road but not into the pond; it was thrown back from the tea-garden opposite.

The last ball was driven into the deep for one; and he had the bowling again. He wasted no time, two twos, both fours but for the grass, and a one, and Ted began to wonder whether another six was coming. It wasn't. Only a four, off a long hop, into the far corner of the field by the swings. The hit had put the hundred up. Every run now was of vital importance. Ted lammed them in, and off his last ball Dick Culvert brought off a clinking catch at point—jumping to a hard square cut and holding it.

102—9—18.

But it wasn't over yet. The old skipper started hitting like a two-year-old, though he couldn't run like one, and Ballard was put on for young Jack; and off the third ball of his second over, Dick

Culvert had an easy one, straight into his hands. But the score had crept up and the innings closed for 111 : leaving Tillingfold 112 to make to win ; not much more than two hours to make them in, as tea was always a superb affair on these occasions, topped with ices.

But they'd be going out again before tea, which would be latish.

Out was dragged the roller : far too light. They were beginning to bump a bit. Perhaps it was better than nothing.

Yes. Here they were, coming out, Paget-Wilson laughing and ragging the skipper as usual. Who was Gauvinier sending in first ? Ah ! good. Dick Culvert and Jimmie Harrison.

My Heavens ! That innings. I shall never forget it. I wish I could give you any idea of the feeling, pitched higher than a revivalist meeting at its most electric. Anyhow, we should have been mad to win this crucial match in the series. And somehow the old beggar's leaving put an edge on the excitement. I tell you, the intensity of it became pretty well unbearable.

Gauvinier was about through. He looked it, as he stood by the car, talking to his womenfolk, seated inside. Doing a little sum in his mind—111—34 : and praying that he might not have to go in a minute or two before the tea-interval. Plus 9 hit off that foul over of his.

Well, anyhow, there were 112 to get now.

Young Farringdon started the bowling from the elm tree end to Dick Culvert. However well you may know his trick of running up as though he were going to send a fast one, and then stiffening his arm to send down one that infernally hangs, you've got to watch him like a lynx, especially at first, or he will catch you in two minds. And every now and then comes one that doesn't hang.

You could see Dick Culvert holding himself in not to play too soon : his muscles were stiff with restraint, but he got on top of it nicely. The next one was a mistake on the leg-side ; no need to stiffen about that one : nor did Dick. He let him have it joyously full and free, a watched four but for the thick grass. However, Jimmie Harrison, running like a deer, insisted on three.

Jimmie Harrison plays his own game : he dislikes nonsense. He has wrists of steel, a wonderful eye, and never wastes time. Along came the ball elaborately made to hang ; he waited for it, found it shortish, and square-cut it angrily for two.

Vereker was bowling from the road end, his action high and easy as Barnes : still so good that you would like every boy, keen on bowling, to watch it, just to see how it should be done. But it would be impossible that he could bowl for long : medium pace, came in sharp off the pitch : very slight variation of pace : looked

nice and innocuous and could be deadly: had it in his bones, the beggar, what to do with the ball: could just flick the bails off . . .

Tall Dick Culvert reached forward to him, played the ball perfectly back: the same with the next one to mid-on. Then a single and I could see how Jimmie would shape to Vereker. As I feared, he waited for him and played back at the last second, a queer shot of his own, with a quick flick from the wrists.

Vereker was obviously pleased: must beat him or get him caught at the wicket or in the slips. For any other man it would have been a certainty. Jimmie's shot, however, is his own. The next he hit to point, who was glad to stop it, and the next well past point for a couple. How he does it is his secret. But well as I knew Jimmie's play, it frightened me to see him use that shot with Vereker. And if ever a man was nearly bowled, Jimmie was by two of the next three balls. The bails fairly shivered on the stumps: my inside trembled with them. Jimmie was still in, and quite unperturbed cut him again for two in his next over. Such a last-second shot is painful to watch when runs are of vital importance.

And both Jimmie and Dick were being too contemptuous of young Farringdon. They helped themselves to six more off his next over to misplaced yells of joy. And then Dick played every ball of an over from Vereker steadily, carefully, and well, except one ball which bumped and made him feel foolish. A few overs played like that would do far more to win the match.

Jimmie believed in runs; and kept on the merry work with young Farringdon, tanking him for two—then driving him for a single far into the slow deep. Dick faced him: was morally certain that the next one must be the fast one: and morally speaking it certainly ought to have been, but it wasn't. Dick, miles too soon for it, patted up, a dolly catch to the gloating bowler, and retired cursing himself for having fallen into such an obvious trap.

19—1—9.

In marched Alec John our innkeeper, wearing, for some good Scottish reason, a beautiful red cap, to show possibly that they do play cricket in that strange land across the border. He put young Farringdon away immediately for a hard-hit one to deep mid-wicket, who by his speed saved two. It would have been better for Jimmie had he risked the second run as he badly wanted to (only a strange Hieland shout succeeded in sending him back), for he took a happy dip at the next ball and, completely baffled by the pace, was bowled, another victim of that perpetually set trap.

20—2—10.

Two good men out: a quarter of an hour and more to go before tea: young Farringdon above himself, as any bowler would be who had got two wickets, precisely as he wanted to get them, in

one over. Ballard came in, our best bat: missed the last ball of the over completely, but it was well off the wicket, luckily.

Alec could make little of Vereker; he hadn't the reach to play properly forward to his good-length ball. He took a half-cock shot at the last ball, and was nicely caught at cover. A full hit, and he would have got hold of it, as well he knew, coming out frowning, and beating his pad with his bat: near enough to bad luck to make any batsman furious, being even nearer to merely foolish play.

Things were beginning to look serious, for the scoreboard read: 24—3—2.

Ted Griffith came in. He and Ballard, together now, were pretty well our last hope. Young Jack, getting his pads on, hadn't been making runs: Gauvinier—well, he wasn't himself, and after him no one who could make runs, though one or two could keep up their wicket, especially Freddie Winthrop. Ten fateful minutes at least before the tea interval. Ted and Ballard knew well their responsibility and rose to it. They played good sound cricket, taking no shadow of a risk, hitting the loose ones hard and clean.

At last the signal for tea was given. Ted 9 not out, Ballard 7 not out, and the score 39. We were deep in the wood, but there was a faint chance of winning, if those two got going after tea.

Oh, it seemed an interminable meal, that tea. I'd finished my flask and biscuits long before there was a sign of anyone emerging from the tent. Then one came, puffing out the smoke from a cigarette, then another, lounging about, talking, in the air.

Gauvinier came striding out, making for his car. I knew how he was feeling, strung up to snapping. He met old Farringdon, and stopped to talk. Young Farringdon joined them.

The umpires went out again: the solemnity of the occasion written large upon Sam Bird's expansive face. The fieldsmen took their places: cheers rose for the batsmen. Ted wore his grim grin of intention: a short chap, very shy, who walked boldly like a tall man. Ballard, dark as a Spaniard, half as tall again, assumed the air of nonchalance.

Old cricket worthies too old to play now, still just able on a warm day to watch, saw them walk out with a sharp pang, remembering times in their own young days when they had gone out to bat on an occasion like this and perhaps they had made them, remembering such times with a vividness past all belief, so that to be sitting disabled by age on a bench seemed a preposterous foolish illusion.

But the bowler was about to deliver his first ball, Ballard was standing ready to play it, the fieldsmen stood alert—we all forgot ourselves (the old men even their age-brought disabilities) in the

interest of the present game, which closed down upon us and held us, taking us into itself.

Redman was bowling, not Vereker. That was interesting: his bowling was new to us. There didn't seem much in it. Ballard at any rate played him with perfect ease.

They ran a single. Ted found no difficulty either with Redman, pushed him back to mid-off as though he'd been playing him for a week. One settled back with some small sense of relief: not too much, as horrid accidents may happen.

But young Farringdon was the main danger: that trap of his, however obvious, was likely to prove fatal to any batsman, strung up and a little over-eager. But Ballard was fully aware of his guile, watched and waited and was quite content with a single. Ted, too, kept a tight hand on his impatience and played the last two balls back along the ground with a good straight bat, and no hesitation.

Slowly and well, they were settling down. And then one thing became apparent—that the man who had remained a dark horse in the batting and who was fielding third man to Redman (in the deep, on the legside to young Farringdon) was an exceptionally brilliant fieldsman. Ballard cut a short one hard in his direction, and he, having watched it on to and off the bat, ready for the shot, reached it, and then in one good swift action gathered it and threw it in bail-high to the stumper. The next ball, too, would have been a safe two to an ordinary man; only a sharp and timely shout from Ballard, sending Ted back, saved the loss of an all-important wicket.

Ted made it all right for himself by beating the next ball hard past cover, his first good happy hit since tea. Two only, not four as it should have been! Young Farringdon was bowling well: not the semblance of a loose ball came as a little gift to Ballard, who helped himself to a pretty two with a square cut past point.

Then quite suddenly the whole of the game underwent a complete change. Redman, practically for the first time, got by the batsman, though not at all near the wicket. Whether this made Ted angry or the bowler above himself, I don't know, but all the remaining five balls of that over Ted lashed between the covers for twos, and Redman bowled no more. The applause was furious. The score was mounting. There remained young Farringdon, but they were taking his measure, stepping out and driving him for long deep hits, that only scored one very likely, but were significant.

The old skipper went on in place of Redman. He very rarely bowled now; but he knew exactly what he wanted to do with the ball, though he was not always quite able to do it. He was a cricketer, through and through. He was bowling from the road end to Ballard, who watched him carefully. He was nearly stumped, too, off the second ball: the bail whipped off but no appeal. Not

the ghost of a liberty could be taken with that stumper behind the wicket. And then out came Ballard to the fifth ball and lifted it hard and true. Clean over the road for six.

The effect of that hit on the game was greater than the six runs recorded in the score-book, and in the next over after Ted had put young Farringdon to leg for a single, Ballard hit him through the covers for a couple and then lifted him into the hedge for four.

When at the end of that over we saw young Farringdon in earnest conversation with the old skipper, who gazed round to see whom he could put on to bowl, even the most sapient felt a glow of confidence, for if ever two men could paste loose bowling, Ballard and Ted were those men.

We were well out of the wood. I could scarcely believe my eyes when I looked at my watch to see that it was barely a quarter to six; so much had happened in so short a time. There was no need for any hurry. The clock at any rate was now beaten. It was all right about Gauvinier: no call would be made upon him now—he'd have a quiet knock and our presentation would end the game nicely.

And oh, my sacred aunt, Paget-Wilson was going slip in place of young Farringdon. Paget-Wilson whose bowling was his friend, the old skipper's, stock joke! Ballard, after the confabulation about the new bowler, now faced the old skipper, and we all got ready to applaud another six into the road.

But it didn't come. Something very different came: something that made you stare and gape in angry amazement, confounded, for Ballard, as sound a cricketer as any I have seen on the ground, Ballard cut the ball hard to third man, no longer a dark horse in the field, and galloped down the wicket like a silly prep.-school kid, to Ted yelling him to get back. Third man picked up the ball and flung it back in one swift clean action, hard into the hands of the stumper, who nipped off the bails with Ballard wandering like a lost soul yards outside the crease. No appeal, no decision. Poor Ballard made his way back to the pavilion—to a storm of applause for his magnificent knock: which he hardly seemed to notice, lost as he was in bewilderment at his unprecedented foolishness.

67—4—22.

Young Jack came in, who can hit as hard, if not harder than any man in the team: a terror to a tired bowler, a fiend on a loose ball.

O Lord, but that won't do; he took a blind swipe at his first ball, and was nowhere near it. The stumper whipped off the bail too; but again there was no appeal, though it must have been a pretty near thing. Excitement came welling back; tingling, painful. And now Paget-Wilson took the ball to bowl to Ted, who could hit with sudden concentrated fury.

Paget-Wilson took a short run and delivered the ball as though

he needed all his body's strength to get his arm over at all.

His first ball was wide which slip moved to the right to reach. His next was a slow painful toss within the batsman's reach and Ted banged it into the hedge for four. The next bumped down almost at his own feet and rolled along the ground. The fourth was a ball that could be played: the fifth was not given a wide. The sixth was another slow easy full toss . . . waste time over fours—over the blasted hedge—but he missed the ball completely, and the slow full toss slowly knocked down his wicket.

It was a more amazing sight than Ballard's run out. I have never before—never—often as I have watched Ted at the nets or batting in a game, seen him completely miss such a ball.

71—5—22.

Once more the whole character of the game had changed. Forty-one more runs were needed: and the two set batsmen had been fooled out. There was young Jack, true. . .

And Gauvinier was walking in. Damned if I could look in his direction. There came suppressed clapping, suppressed, yet eager: aching to cheer him: fearful of putting him off his game.

I looked up to see him taking his block. Young Farringdon went back to slip. I could hardly force myself to look at the first ball. Do you know, I said aloud: "Oh, thank God!" when he hit that first ball clean and true for an easy single. Then one for young Jack: and he had the bowling again. A long hop on the off—he's got it, got it with all his strength, it'll reach the boundary, must—damn that accursed thick grass—but they've run three.

My Heavens! It was good to hear the yell of delight which greeted that shot. Pent up, my God! And then we had a chance to let it loose. It was let loose. See him striding between the wicket with those long legs, using every inch of his length to spare his wind. If he and young Jack got going we should be all right.

But young Jack took a tremendous whack at the next ball, blind certain of a six; the bat was a fraction of an inch out of place: hit the ball a shade on the edge, and up it went higher, a huge height into the air, and underneath stood Vereker, moving with unhurrying stride to the exact spot where it must fall, and did fall into his safe hands.

I must have missed some shots in my excitement, for I thought the score-board must be wrong in displaying the figures.

84—6—1.

Freddie Winthrop came hurrying out, sworn to keep his end up. These two had made many a decent stand together. Would they once more? Judging by his set face, it wouldn't be Freddie's fault if they didn't.

The next ten minutes were agonizing. A vibrant stillness in

which Gauvinier's voice sounded loud, calling after every ball, *No* or *Wait*, for he says something at every ball bowled, old-fashioned perhaps, but right, dead right. Only ones came, and those slowly.

Vereker bowled Gauvinier a maiden. I suppose the delivery of six balls can only last an allotted time; but they seemed to last an eternity, though Gauvinier seemed to be seeing them perfectly, and using his reach without any hesitation. Two singles came off Farringdon's next over, each loudly applauded. The score crawled up. And there followed another long, long maiden to Gauvinier. I could not believe my eyes to see him playing, thus patiently, without flurry, like a good example from a good book; but the strain of watching it was terrible. Two singles and a two off Farringdon, and each run was cheered like a six: men were walking up and down in their excitement: wiping their faces: pommelling each other like little boys: it was ridiculous to see.

And once more Gauvinier was standing ready for Vereker. A wild roar burst from every man as we saw the ball rise. The man in the deep stepped back, stopped at the hedge, and the ball bounced in the road and up again so that Gauvinier saw it on the bounce, over the hedge: a little high for a perfectly safe six but a glorious smack. Motor horns hooted; men kept on shouting; a little girl by their car waved her arms about madly. Stillness for the next ball; played quietly back. Then a bad long hop. Gauvinier withdrew and with all his might smote it into the hedge, well out of reach of the man in the deep: another roar of joy went up.

Sid Smith called out: "And just once more, please!" and every one burst out laughing. Vereker was taken off; changed places with the old skipper. Freddie, after a leg-bye, took a couple off him; that sent up the hundred. Twelve more, by gum! But there came another halt: a single here, a single there. Neither bowler gave anything away. And then Freddie, trying to smother a straight one, got right in front of his wicket and was out l.b.w.

105—7—5.

Sam Gault came in. Four more runs, and Sam was stumped.

109—8—1.

Then Sid Smith came out to join his skipper. Hit the last ball of the over for two. It was a tie.

You should have heard the yell that greeted Gauvinier's next shot off young Farringdon, as good a drive as he has ever made, far past extra-cover—into the thickest of thick grass. He was shaking all over after running that three—the winning hit. It was twenty minutes past six.

They went on playing. We talked and laughed, at perfect ease at last, all strain gone. Soon Sid patted up a catch to Vereker, and came running out. Charlie came in for a knock, and while he was

still in, the umpire called out last over.

Lord, how Gauvinier was cheered. We flocked round him.

He rushed off to his womenfolk—jumped on to the running-board, leaned into the car, shaking hands, saying: "What did I tell you? Still going strong?"

He came back—he was pouring with sweat—panting, shaking—to take off his pads. Old Francis called out: "Forty not out. And not too bad for you, metty."

A small boy helped him take his pads off; his hands were shaking. Dick Culvert stood by him.

"I'm going to slip off now."

"Yes, just a minute."

He took him by the arm and guided him to the small changing-room. All the team were there. They started shaking hands with him. There was hardly room to move. He was pushing out, when the General began to speak and we all crowded back. Gauvinier sat down, bewildered, still sweating, bowed his head.

The General spoke slowly and with genuine feeling. Of what Gauvinier had done for the cricket, of his example of sportsmanship—all the familiar things, you know: but none of them sounded in the least familiar in the circumstances. Gauvinier, right in the thick of it, as it were, bowed his head lower and lower. The General stopped and presented the silver inkstand, which Gauvinier stood holding.

He began to speak in reply: began very well: "All these pleasant things said . . . but of course it's the fellows one plays with make the game . . ." Then he stopped suddenly, swallowed. His face puckered: he managed to articulate, "Thank you very much," and burst out of the little changing-room door, clutching the inkstand.

That's the story of the game.

"If it had been arranged for me," Gauvinier said, "it could not have been more perfect. All I wanted. To hit a six. To have another little stand with Freddie and Sid: to come off—and I was physically beaten: too knock-kneed to bowl—too blear-eyed to see. Do you see what I mean?"

I did in a way. But the fact is that he is superstitious, and superstitious in a way that I don't really very much like. But, dear God! How he treasures that inkstand!

* * *

A woman on time is one in nine.

ADDISON MIZNER

SUCCESS STORY

Is not a splendid marriage a a work of art, also?

by ROBERT FONTAINE

PIERRE had always fancied himself an artist. He was a slim, olive-skinned man about thirty when I first heard of him. He had started talking to me in the American Bar. He was very vivacious, very happy, glowing with pride as if some great prize had been awarded him.

After a few drinks together we moved outside into the spring under the chestnut trees, and as I watched the sun coming down through those trees the way it does in Paris in the spring, this is the story Pierre told me. I do not know whether it is true. Perhaps it was something Pierre invented to amuse an awkward American. At any rate, here it is.

When I was first young (Pierre said), I am excited to be an artist. My father is an artist and is always painting on the walls. The walls of our home are of white plaster and my father covers them with brilliant colours: birds, flowers, South Sea Island native girls and suchlike.

As I grow up and go to school the teachers tell me, "Ah, Pierre, you have the talent. You will not be wasted keeping books or in some bureau of the government. You will be among the best of the nation."

This is a pleasing thing to hear when one is young. I relate it to my parents. They are proud. They relate it to cousins, uncles, godfather and so forth. It is not long before all the district is sure I am going to be a great artist. They mention the long, slim fingers I have. They speak of the sharp eye for colour. They note the hard way I work. No doubt about it.

The years arrive and leave. I am twenty-one, twenty-two. People are still talking about my great future. To me this future was spoken of so much I took for granted it would arrive. Suddenly, one day, I realize all these people are making a farm from one egg. I have done nothing really to suggest that I am an artist. Oh, I have sketched, painted, designed scenery, created costumes for amateur theatricals—but nothing unusual, nothing outstanding.

I look around me, worried. This thing gnaws at me. I come to Paris. Perhaps there it will be better. Every few months when I go home everybody says, "Ah, what triumph has arrived so far?" I smile as if I were too modest to speak.

Then one day I am filled with love for a girl named Yvette. She is dainty, clean, tender, shy. She is like the small flowers that grow near my home, simple, natural and beautiful.

I am inspired to paint her portrait. This at last will make me know I am a great artist. If the portrait is not accepted at the best galleries, no matter. In my heart I will know if it is great.

The portrait is painted with bold, swift, sure strokes. When it is finished, I observe that it is very bad. I have not been thinking, really, about the portrait at all. I have been in a hurry to finish it.

I tear the portrait in pieces. What is the use?

When I am home in my attic I stretch myself on the old, torn couch and look at the stars. Shall I marry Yvette? Is not a splendid marriage a work of art, also? Can I not tell myself I have accomplished what I intended if I make of marriage a thing of creative genius?

This seems logical. But do I wish to marry Yvette? Truthfully all my dreams have been filled with beautiful, golden girls with striking clothes and handsome figures. This Yvette, she is so small and simple, like a small, loving fawn.

We are married. At first everything is beautiful. The weather is beautiful. The small apartment is beautiful. She is working and making a nice sum. Even I am working here and there, designing dresses, arranging the hair in a beauty salon and such like.

All is wine and roses for the first year. Comes the second year and I am restless and dissatisfied. Oh, not with Yvette. Who can be dissatisfied with Yvette? She sings in a small voice about the house. She keeps every corner free from dust. She smiles and she is warm and loving.

What is wrong is with me. I am becoming old and I have not made myself an artistic success.

The years come and arrive swiftly, always with the thought of my failure gnawing at me. At length an idea strikes me. I shall create a true work of beauty. Not with paints and oils but with a living creature. I shall make Yvette, the little mouse, the most beautiful woman in Paris!

Ha, what a scheme, eh? What a mad scheme. There must be empty rooms in my head, no? Well, perhaps.

"Yvette," I tell her one day as she sits on my knee, "we must do something about your hair."

"You do not like my hair?" She is wounded.

" My small pigeon, I adore your hair. But let us see for the sport if we cannot improve it, eh ? "

Presently we have Yvette's hair so that there is no coiffure so charming in Paris. Next comes the face, the make-up. Never before has Yvette used make-up. I study all the books. I consult with my friends. Soon we have arrived at a make-up which causes Yvette's face to be startling in its beauty.

We come now to the gowns. I rack my head. I search the history of costume. I sew. I match. I rip. I remodel. I fit. I am in a fever arranging these clothes. I feel good. I feel filled with excitement. And why ? Because now I am creating with all my heart. Always I am laughing and dancing. Oh, what a beautiful life to be thus absorbed.

The day comes, of course, when Yvette is complete. From the coiffure to the shoes she is done. I look at her with admiration. How beautiful she is ! It takes my breath away.

That night I sleep peacefully for the first time in years, but the next day there are new doubts waiting for me. I think she is an artistic success. Yes. But I created her. What about the world ? Ah, there is the test.

Pierre paused and smiled to himself. He ordered another drink and sipped it slowly.

" Well," I asked, " what happened ? Was she a success ? "

" Why else am I celebrating ? She is a success so complete there could be no doubt about it whatever and there can be no doubt I am a great artist for I have created this beautiful thing."

I waited for the end. I knew there must be more because he was smiling slyly at me, his eyes winking with golden lights.

" A count, a minister of state, an ambassador and two famous actors are madly in love with her."

I agreed that was certainly proof of his talent.

" And tomorrow," he added, rising, " she marries the second richest man in France."

I looked up at him and then in the direction in which he was staring, smiling. A tall, heavy brunette, quite unlike his Yvette, was coming towards him eagerly. He turned to me before he left to join her and said, " Today, I begin an entirely new creation. Wish me success."

* * *

Work is the greatest thing in the world, so we should save some of it for tomorrow. D.H.

Talking of Tortoises

You draw your head forward, slowly, from your
little wimple
And set forward, slow-dragging, on your four-
pinned toes,
Rowing slowly forward.
Whither away, small bird?

D. H. LAWRENCE, *Baby Tortoise*

Mar. 17. Brought away Mrs. Snooke's old tortoise, Timothy, which she valued much, & had treated kindly for near 40 years. When dug out of it's hybernaculum, it resented the Insult by hissing.

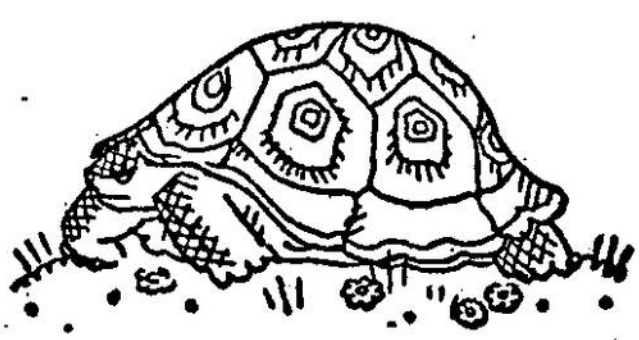
May 13. After a fast of 7, or 8 months, the tortoise which in Oct. 1779 weighed six pounds 9 oun : & ½ averdupoise, weighs now only 6 pounds 4 ounces. Timothy begins to break his fast May 17 on the globe-thistle, & American willow-herb ; his favourite food is lettuce, & dandelion, cucumber, & kidney-beans.

June 5. The tortoise took his usual ramble, & could not be confined within the limits of the garden. His pursuits, which seem to be of the amorous kind, transport him beyond the bounds of his usual gravity at this season. He was missing for some days, but found at last near the upper malt-house.

July 10. Timothy eats voraciously ; but picks out the hearts & stems of Coss-lettuce, holding the outer leaves back with his feet.

Nov. 27. Timothy the tortoise sleeps in the fruit-border under the wall, covered with a hen-coop, in which is a good armfull of straw. Here he will lie warm, secure, & dry. His back is partly covered with mould.

GILBERT WHITE, *Journals*



★*"Torpedo, sir!" The sloop "Marlborough", homeward bound after a long stretch of North Atlantic escort, had received a cruel hit. The Captain was about to give the order, "Abandon ship," when a burst of shell-fire from the U-boat revealed its position and "Marlborough's" guns, mortally wounded in the same instant, destroyed the enemy. With only a remnant of his men left the Captain determined to save his beloved ship. He began to re-organize. In the engine-room someone asked, "Do you think we'll be able to steam, sir?"*

The Last Part of

H.M.S. MARLBOROUGH WILL ENTER HARBOUR

by NICHOLAS MONSARRAT

THE Captain hesitated a moment, and then said:

"If the weather stays like it is now, and we can correct the trim a bit, I think we ought to make a start."

"How far to go, sir?"

"About five hundred miles." That was as much as he wanted to talk about it and he nodded and turned to go.

With his foot on the ladder he said: "I expect we'll be able to count every one of them."

The laughter as he began to climb was a tonic for himself as well. It hadn't been a very good joke, but it was the first one for a long time.

The sick bay next.

The doctor was asleep in an arm-chair when he came in, his young sensitive face turned away from the light, his hands splayed out on the arms of the chair as if each individual finger were resting after an exhaustive effort. The sick-berth attendant was bending over one of the lower cots, where a bandaged figure lay with closed, deeply circled eyes.

There were eight men altogether: after the night's turmoil the room was surprisingly tidy, save for a pile of bloodstained swabs and dressings which had overflowed from the waste-basket. The tidiness and the sharp aseptic smell were reassuring.

He put his hand out, and touched the sleeping figure.

"Good morning, doctor."

Soundlessly the doctor woke, opened his eyes, and sat up. Even this movement seemed part of some controlled competent routine.

"Hallo, sir!"

" Busy night ? "

" Very, sir. All right, though."

" Just what you were waiting for ? " The Captain smiled.

The doctor looked at the Captain, and smiled back, and said : " I haven't felt so well for years."

It must be odd to feel like that, about what must surely have been the goriest night of his life. But it was natural, if you were proud and confident of your professional skill, and for three years you felt you had been utterly wasted. This young man, who had barely been qualified when war broke out, must now feel, with justice, that the initials after his name had at last come to life.

The Captain looked round the sick bay. " Where are the rest of them ? Adams said you had sixteen."

" Four died." It was extraordinary how the simplicity of phrase and tone still conveyed an assurance that the lives had been fought for, and only surrendered in the last extremity. " I've spread the rest over the officers' cabins, where they'll be more comfortable. There's one in yours, sir."

" That's all right . . . How's the midshipman ? "

" Bad. In fact going, I'm afraid, sir. That chest wound was too deep, and he lost too much blood. Do you want to take a look at him ? He's in his own cabin."

" Is he conscious ? "

The doctor shook his head. " No. I've had to dope him pretty thoroughly. That's the trouble : if I go on doping him he'll die of it, and if I let him wake up there's enough shock and pain to kill him almost immediately. That's why it's no good." Again the simple tone seemed able to imply an infinity of skill and care, which had proved unavailing.

" I won't bother, then." The phrase sounded callous, but he did not bother to qualify it : he was suddenly impatient to leave this antiseptic corner, and get to work on the ship. She, at least, was still among the living : no dope, no ordered death-bed for her. He had skill and care of his own sort . . .

As he came out on the quarter-deck he checked his step, for there, arranged in neat rows, which somehow seemed a caricature of the whole idea of burial, were the sewn-up bodies which he must later commit to the deep. Nineteen of them : three officers and sixteen men. There had not been enough ensigns to cover them all, he noted : here and there three of them shared one flag, crowding under it in a pathetic, last-minute symbolism . . . Adams, who had been waiting for him, straightened up as he emerged. He had only been bending down to adjust one of the formal canvas packages ; but the Captain had a sudden ghoulish fancy that Adams had been giving it the traditional " last stitch "—the needle and thread through the nose, by which the sailmaker used to satisfy himself that the body he was sewing up was beyond doubt that of a dead man.

The Captain looked away, and up at the sky. It was full light now : a grey cold day, the veiled sun shedding the thinnest watery gleam, the waste of water round them reduced to a long flat swell. The

passing of the storm, or some lull in its centre, had brought a windless day for their respite.

Chief, who had waited behind in the engine-room, now joined them, and together the three men crossed the upper deck towards the fo'c'sle. The Captain led the party, picking his way past the bloody ruin of " X " gun, and the men who were at work cleaning up. He was conscious of them looking at him : conscious of a suppressed, heightened tension among them all : conscious, for example, that Leading Seaman Tapper, not an outstanding personality, had this morning assumed a new, almost heroic bearing. As the only leading seaman left alive, he was already rising to the challenge . . . With the coming of daylight all these men had won back what the stoker, working and waiting below decks, still lacked : hope in the future, confidence in themselves and the ship. " The ship is your best lifebelt "—a phrase in his Standing Orders for damage control returned to him. By God, that was still true ; and all the men up here trusted and believed it.

Presently they were standing on the fo'c'sle by " A " gun. From here the deck, buckled and distorted, led steeply downwards, till the bullring in the bows was not more than three or four feet from the water : even allowing for this downward curve of the deck, *Marlborough* must be drawing about twenty-eight feet instead of her normal sixteen. Obviously, the first essential was to correct this if possible : not only to ease the pressure forward when they started moving, but also to bring the screws fully under water again.

The Captain stepped forward carefully till he was standing directly over the explosion area : there he leant over the rail, staring down into the water a few feet away. From somewhere below an oily scum oozed out, trailing aft and away like some disgusting suppuration ; but of the wound itself nothing could be seen. Unprofessionally, he was glad of that : it was sufficiently distressing to note the broad outlines of *Marlborough*'s plight on this cold grey morning, without being confronted with the gross details. He realized suddenly that this must now be treated as a technical problem, and nothing more, and after a quick look round the rest of the fo'c'sle he turned back to the Chief and Adams.

" I've got three ideas," he said briskly. " You may have some more . . . For a start, we'll get rid of as much as possible of this "—he tapped one of the lowered barrels of " A " gun, askew on its drooping platform. " It wouldn't be safe to fire them anyway, so we can ditch the barrels—and even the mounting itself if we can lift it clear."

" The derrick can deal with the barrels, sir," said Adams. " I don't know about the rest."

" We'll see . . . Then there are the anchors. We can either let them run out altogether, with their cables, or else let the anchors go by themselves, and manhandle the cable aft as a counterweight. What do you think, Chief ? "

" The second idea is the best one, sir. But without steam on the windlass we can't get the cable out of the locker."

"We'll have to do that by hand." The Captain turned to Adams again. "We've still got one of those weapons, haven't we?—the ratchet-and-pawl lever?"

"Yes, sir. It's a long job, though."

"I know." They had once had to weigh anchor by this archaic method, a long time ago, bringing in the cable link by link, half a link to each stroke of the lever, which needed four men to operate it. It had been an agonizingly slow process, taking nearly six hours and everyone's temper. Now they would have to do it to each cable in turn . . . "But it's worth it, to get some of the weight aft. Then there's the windlass itself. If we pull it to pieces and use a sheer-legs to lift the heavy parts, we might get rid of a lot of weight that way."

The Engineer Officer nodded, rather abstractedly. It would be his job later to account for all this, item by item, in triplicate at least, and the whole thing was a horrid distortion of the principles of storekeeping. But he put the thought on one side, and produced an idea which must have been professionally more acceptable.

"I was wondering about the fore-peak, sir," he began. "You know we've kept it flooded for the last two trips, to balance the weight of those extra depth-charges aft. We can't pump it out now, because the suction-line is broken. But if we took this cover-plate off"—he pointed to the small plate screwed to the deck, right up in the bows—"and made sure the compartment was still isolated, we could pump it out by hand. That would give us some buoyancy just where we need it."

The Captain nodded quickly. "Good idea, Chief. You'll have to go carefully, though, in case the bulkhead's gone and it's all part of the explosion area. By the way, what's the fuel situation going to be, with all this part isolated?"

"Oh, we'll have plenty, sir, especially if we're only steaming on one boiler. We've still got the two big tanks aft."

"Right . . ." He looked out at the sea again, and then at his watch. It was nearly nine. "I'll read the burial service in half an hour, Adams, if you'll have everything ready by then. Then you can make a start on the weight-lifting programme—the gun first, and then the anchors. Can you spare any stokers, Chief?"

"Maybe two, sir."

"The fresh air will be a nice change for them . . ."

His spirits were rising.

BUT there was nothing artificial, no formal assumption of mourning, in what he felt half an hour later, as he opened his prayer book, gave "Off caps" in a low, almost gentle voice, and prepared to read the service.

All that remained of his ship's company stood in a rough square on the quarter-deck: at their feet the nineteen bodies, in their canvas shrouds, seemed like some sinister carpet from which they could not take their eyes. There were altogether too many of them: barely did the living outnumber the dead and if the men caught in the fo'c'sle were reckoned, the living were only curious survivals of a

vanished time . . . That pause in the service, when he said, "We do now commit their bodies to the deep," and then waited, as the burial party got to work and the nineteen bodies made their successive splashes, their long dive—that pause seemed to be lasting for ever.

The men in their stained sea-boots and duffle coats stood silent, their hair ruffled, watching the bodies go: flanking him, the doctor and the Chief completed the square of witnesses. The rough canvases scraped the deck as they were dragged across; the bodies splashed and vanished; the ship rolled, and all their feet shifted automatically to meet it; a seaman coughed; the silence under the cold sky was oppressive and somehow futile. He himself, with an appalling clarity of feeling, was conscious of cruel loss. These had been his own men: to see them "discharged dead" in this perfunctory wholesale fashion only deepened the sense of personal bereavement which was in his face and his voice as he took up the reading again.

When it was done he put the book away and faced his ship's company: in their expression, too, was something of the wastage and sadness of the moment. It was not what he wished to dwell on, but he could not dismiss it without a word: that would have been as cruelly artificial as using the dead men to whip up hatred, or additional energy for the task ahead. It was no time for anything save sincerity.

"I shall never need reminding of this moment," he began, "and I know that is true for all of you too. We have lost good men, good shipmates, and there are many more whom we cannot even reach to give them proper burial. We can't forget them, any more than we can forget the three officers and sixteen men we've just seen over the side. But," he raised his voice a little, "one of the hardest things of war is that there is never any spare time to think about these things, or to mourn men like these as they deserve. That has to come later: there's always something to do; and in this case it's going to be the toughest job any of us has ever undertaken.

"I may as well tell you that I nearly gave the order to abandon ship last night: for the moment the weather has saved us, and we must do our utmost to profit by it. I'm not going to hold out too much hope: but if the weather holds, and the bulkhead, which is taking most of the strain, doesn't collapse, and if I can correct the trim, we stand a good chance of getting in—or at least of going far enough south to meet other ships." He smiled. "You can see there are a lot of 'ifs' about this job. But it would be a hundred times worth trying, even if our lives didn't depend on it.

"I myself am going to do my utmost to get this ship in, and I'm counting on every man to back me up. Remember there are only thirty-one of us altogether, and that means a double and triple effort from each one of you . . .

"We'll stand easy now, and then get to work. And keep this idea in the back of your minds: if we do get *Marlborough* in, it will be the finest thing any of us have ever done."

He wanted to say more: affected as he had been by the burials, he wanted to dwell on this aspect of sacrifice, and on *Marlborough* as

a measure of its validity and as something dear to them all. But he was afraid of sounding theatrical : better perhaps to leave it like this, a challenge to their endurance and seamanship, and look to the outcome.

When he returned to the bridge he took out the deck-log and began to make an entry concerning the death and burial of his men. It was while he was adding the nineteen names and ratings that he noticed it was the morning of New Year's Day.

ALL that day they lay there, the ship's only motion a sluggish rolling. But within her the movement and the noises were cheerful.

The ditching of " A " gun barrels and the greater part of the mounting was easy : the breaking and moving of the anchor cables a long-drawn-out effort which lasted till well after dark. But the cables, hauled in sections along the upper deck and stowed right aft among the depth-charges, made an appreciable difference to their trim : so did the jettisoned windlass, which disappeared overboard bit by bit, as in some mysterious conjuring trick. (It was too heavy and unwieldy to move aft). But the pumping out of the fore-peak (the triangular section which makes up the bows) was the most successful of all. It acted as a buoyancy chamber where it could exert the most leverage, and it brought the bows up cheerfully.

Altogether, by the time the programme was fulfilled, the draught forrard had improved to twenty-four feet, and the screws aft were deep enough to get a firm grip of the water. Of course, she would steer like a mongrel waving its tail ; but that wouldn't matter. There was no one watching.

One curious accident attended the lightening process. As *Marlborough*'s draught forrard began to alter decisively, two bodies, released by some chance movement of the hull, floated out from the hole in the port side. They drifted away before they could be recovered : they were both badly burned, and both sprawling in relaxed, ungainly attitudes as though glad to be quit of their burden.

The Captain, looking down from the bridge, watched them with absorbed attention, obsessed by the fancy that they were a first instalment of the sacrifice which must be paid before the ship got under way.

He heard a rating on the fo'c'sle say : " The second one was Fletcher—poor bastard," and he felt angry at the curt epitaph, as if its informality might somehow weaken the magic. He could not remember having had thoughts like that since he was a small boy. Perhaps it was the beginning of feeling really tired.

For him it had been a long day, and now at dusk, with the prospect of another night of drifting, he felt impatient to put things to the test.

He had been all over the ship again : he had seen the midshipman and two ratings who were also dying : he had looked at the radio set (from which the leading tel. had at last stood back and said : " It's no good, sir—there's too much smashed ") : he had made a third examination of the bulkheads where they had been able to

insert another shore and a felt-and-tallow patch, to take up the slack as the pressure on it relaxed. He had directed the work on the cables, Adams being busy on "A" gun.

Now he had nothing to do but wait for Chief's report from the engine-room : the hardest part of all. He had the sky to watch, and the barometer, low but steady ; and that was all. The main ordeal still lay ahead.

It was nine o'clock that evening before the Engineer Officer came up with his report : the Captain was sitting in the deserted wardroom aft, eating the corned beef hash which was now their staple diet and remembering other parties which this room had witnessed, when there were eight of them, with Number One's wife and Gun's fiancée and one of the Mid.'s colourful young women to cheer them. Now the dead men and the mourning women outnumbered the living : no charm, no laughter could enliven any of the absent . . .

Impatiently he ground a half-smoked cigarette into his plate, cursing these ridiculous thoughts and fancies, unlike any he could remember, which were beginning to crowd in on him. There was no time to spare for such irrelevancies : he had one supreme task to concentrate on, and anything else was a drain on energy and attention alike.

Chief came in, shedding a pair of oily gauntlets, looking down apologetically at his stained white overalls.

"Well, Chief ?"

"Pretty good, sir."

He crossed to the pantry hatch and hammered on it, demanding his supper. Then he sat down in his usual place at the foot of the table, and leant back. "The switchboard's done, and they're working on the dynamo now : it had a bad shake up, but I think we'll manage."

He was obviously very tired, eyelids drooping in a grey lined face. The Captain suddenly realized how much depended on this man's skill.

"I'll be flashing up when I've finished supper."

"How long before we can steam ?"

"Can't say to the nearest hour, sir. It'll be some time tomorrow, unless we run into more snags. There's the boiler-room to pump out, and a lot of cleaning up besides. It'll only be one screw, I'm afraid. The other's nearly locked : the shaft must be badly bent."

"It doesn't matter."

Bridger came in with the Chief's supper, and for a little while there was silence as he ate. Then, between bites, he asked :

"How's the midshipman, sir ?"

"Pretty nearly gone. God knows what keeps him alive. His chest's in an awful mess."

Chief looked round the room, and said : "It's funny to see this place empty."

There was silence again till he had finished eating. They shared the same thoughts, but it was less discomforting to leave them unspoken.

Bridger, coming in with the Chief's coffee, broke the silence by asking the Captain :

"Will you be sleeping down here, sir ? "

"No, in the asdic hut again."

"Will you see Petty Officer Adams, sir ? "

"Yes. Tell him to come in."

There was a whispering in the pantry, and Adams came in, cap in hand. "Same routine tonight, sir ? " he asked.

"Yes, Adams. Two look-outs, and the signalman on the bridge. I'll be in the asdic hut."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Things seem to be going all right. We should get going some time tomorrow."

Adams's severe face cracked into a grin. "Can I tell the hands, sir ? "

"Yes, do." The Captain stood up, and began to put on his duffle coat. "How about some sleep for you, Chief ? "

The Chief nodded. "As soon as I've finished up, sir. There'll be a bit of time to spare then." Relaxing, with coffee-cup in hand, he looked round the wardroom. "New Year's Day. I wish we had *the radio. It feels so cut off.*"

"With luck you'll have your bedtime music tomorrow." He went out, stepping over the dozen sleeping men who crowded the alleyway, and made his way forward to the bridge again. With luck tomorrow might bring everything they were waiting for.

The sea was still calm, the glass unwaveringly steady.

HE awoke suddenly at five o'clock, startled and uneasy. For a moment he puzzled over what had disturbed him : then he realized gratefully what it was. The lights had come on, and the little heater screwed to the bulkhead was glowing. It meant that the dynamos were now running properly, and the switchboard, which the Chief had been reserving for the engine-room circuit, was able to deal with the full load.

With a surge of thankfulness almost light-headed, he got up and went over to the side table. On it lay a chart and a pair of dividers, ready for a job which, impelled by yet another of those queer fancies, he had sworn not to tackle until this moment had arrived. The course for home . . . He took out his pencil and prepared to calculate.

The only mark on the chart was Pilot's neat cross (too damned appropriate) marking their estimated position when the torpedo struck them, with the time and date—1630/31/12. From this he started to measure off. Distance to the Clyde—520 miles. Distance to the nearest of the Faeroes—210 miles, and nothing much when you got there. Distance to the nearest point of Britain—the Butt of Lewis, 270 miles. And just round the corner, another 30 miles or so—Stornoway . . . That was the place to make for, he knew. It had no big repairing facilities, but it would be shelter enough, and they would be able to send tugs to bring them the rest of the

way home. Stornoway—300 miles. Say three knots. A hundred hours. Four days. Good enough.

Now for the course. The magnetic course, it must be : the master gyro-compass had been wrecked, and they would have to depend on the magnetic compasses, trusting that the explosion and the shifting of ballast had not put them out. South-east would do it. South-east for four days. Butt of Lewis was a good mark for them (he checked it on the chart) : a flashing light, visible fourteen miles. That would bring them in all right. And what a landfall . . .

When finally he laid down his pencil he was still in the same state of exaltation as had possessed him when he saw the lights come on. The desire to sleep had vanished : impelled to some sort of activity, he left the shelter of the asdic hut and began to pace up and down outside.

By God, once they got going there would be no stopping them . . . What did four days matter ?—they could keep going for four weeks if it meant *Marlborough* making harbour at the end.

There was no depression now, no morbid brooding about sacrifices or the cost in men. It was *Marlborough* against the sea and the enemy, and tomorrow would see her cheating them both.

He looked up at the sky, clear and frosty : a night for action, for steering small, for laughing and killing at the same time. The first night of 1943. And tomorrow they would sail into the new year like a prize-fighter going in for the finish. Nothing was going to stop them now.

Midday found them still drifting, still powerless. A succession of minor breakdowns involving in turn the fans and the steering-engine held up everything during the morning : at noon a defect in one of the oil pumps led to more delay. The suspended activity, the anti-climax after that first rush of feeling, was a severe test of patience : it was with difficulty that the Captain, walking the upper deck, managed to exhibit a normal confidence.

Part of the morning was taken up with the burying of two more men who had died during the night, but for the remainder he had little to occupy him ; and as the afternoon advanced and the light declined, a dull stupor, matching his own indolence, seemed to envelop the ship. Stricken with the curse of immobility, she accepted the dusk as if it were all that her languor deserved.

Then, as swiftly as that first torpedo strike, the good news came. Chief, presenting himself in the wardroom with a cheerful grin, announced that his repairs were complete : he used the classic formula " Ready to proceed, sir ! " and he seemed to shed ten years in saying it. The Captain got up slowly, smiling in answer.

" Thank you, Chief . . . A remarkable effort."

" We're all touching wood, sir." But he was almost boyish in his good humour.

" I want to start very gently. Twenty or thirty revs., not more. Will you put a reliable hand on the bulkhead ? "

" I'll go myself, sir. The Chief E.R.A. can take charge in the engine-room."

"All right." The Captain raised his voice. "Pantry!"

The leading steward appeared.

"Ask Petty Officer Adams to come up to the bridge."

"Aye, aye, sir."

"I'll just ring 'Slow ahead' when I'm ready, Chief. We can do the rest by voice-pipe. If you hear anything at all from the bulkhead, stop engines straight away, of your own accord."

Within a minute or so he was on the bridge, the signalman by his side, Adams in the wheel-house below. Leaning across the faintly lit compass he called down the voice-pipe:

"How's her head down there?"

"South, eighty west, sir."

The two compasses were in agreement. "Right . . . Our course is south-east, Adams. Bring her round very slowly when we begin to move."

"Aye, aye, sir." Adams's voice, like the signalman's hard breathing at his elbow, reflected the tension that was binding them all.

The Captain took a deep breath. "Slow ahead starboard."

"Slow ahead starboard, sir."

The telegraph rang. There was a pause, then a slight tremor, then the beginning of a smooth pulsation. Very slowly *Marlborough* began to move. A thin ripple of bow-wave stood out in the luminous twilight: then another. In the compass bowl the floating disc stirred, edging away to the right. The ship started her turn, a slow, barely perceptible turn, 125 degrees to port in a wide half-circle nearly a mile across.

Presently he called down the voice-pipe: "Steering all right?"

"Yes, sir. Five degrees of port wheel on."

The engine-room bell rang, and he bent to the voice-pipe, his throat constricted. "What is it?"

From the background of noise below an anonymous voice said: "Message from the engineer, sir. 'Nothing to report.'"

"Thank you."

A long pause, with nothing but smooth sliding movement. Then from Adams, suddenly: "Course—south-east, sir."

"Very good."

They were started. Forty-eight hours after the torpedoing: two days and two nights adrift. Course south-east.

The wind, now growing cold on his cheek, was like a caress.

THAT first night, those first fourteen hours of darkness on the bridge, had the intensity and the disquiet of personal dedication. It was as if he were taking hold of *Marlborough*—a sick, uncertain, but brave accomplice—and nursing her through the beginnings of a desperate convalescence.

He rarely stirred from his chair, because he could see all he wanted from there—the sagging fo'c'sle, the still rigid bows—and he could hear and feel all the subtleties of her movement forward: but occasionally he stepped to the wing of the bridge and glanced aft,

where their pale wake glittered and spread. Of all that his eyes could rest on, that was the most heartening . . . Then back to his chair, and the stealthy advance of the bows, and the perpetual humming undercurrent that came from the engine-room voice-pipe, as comforting as the steady beat of an aircraft engine in mid-ocean. He was not in the least tired : sustained by love and hope, he felt ready to lend to *Marlborough* all his reserves of endurance.

At midnight the Chief came up to join him. His report was good : the engine had settled down, the bulkhead seemed unaffected by their forward movement. They discussed the idea of increasing speed, and decided against it : the log showed a steady three knots, sufficient for his plans.

" There's no point in taking bigger chances," said the Captain finally. " She's settled down so well that it would be stupid to fool about with the revs. I think we'll leave things as they are."

" Suits me, sir. It'll be a lot easier, seeing how shorthanded we are down there."

" You're working watch-and-watch, I suppose ? "

" Got to, sir, with only two E.R.A.s. I'd stand a watch myself, but there's all the auxiliary machinery to look after." He yawned and stretched. " How about you, sir ? Shall I give you a spell ? "

" No, I'm all right, thanks, Chief. You turn in now, and get some sleep." The Captain smiled. " I always seem to be saying that to you. I hope you're doing it."

Chief smiled back. " Trust me, sir. Good night."

Presently, up the voice-pipe, came Adams's voice : " All right to hand over, sir ? "

" Who's taking the wheel ? "

" Leading Seaman Tapper, sir."

" All right, Adams. What does the steering feel like now ? "

" A bit lumpy, sir. It takes a lot to bring her round if she starts swinging off. But it's nothing out of the way, really."

" I don't want anyone except you or Tapper to take the wheel until daylight."

" Aye, aye, sir."

It meant a long trick at the wheel for both these two ; but inexpert steering might put too great a strain on the hull, and he wanted its endurance to be fully demonstrated before running any risks.

A moment later he heard the confirmatory " Course south-east—starboard engine slow ahead—Leading Seaman Tapper on the wheel," as Adams was relieved. Then the bridge settled down to its overall watchful tranquillity again.

Indeed, his only other visitor, save for Bridger with a two-hourly relay of cocoa, was the doctor, who came up to tell him that the midshipman was dead. It was news which he had been waiting for, news with no element of surprise in it ; but coming at a time of tension and weariness, towards the dawn, when he was cold and stiff and his eyes felt rimmed with tiredness, it was profoundly depressing.

The midshipman, as captain's secretary, had spent a great deal of time with him : he was a cheerful, still irresponsible young man

who had the makings of a first-class sailor. Now, at daylight, they would be burying him—and that only after alternate periods of agony and stupor, which had robbed death of every dignity. This, the latest and the most touching of the sacrifices that had been demanded of them, destroyed for the moment all the night's achievement.

Dawn restored it: a grey sunless dawn, only a lightening of the dull arch above them: but the new and blessed day for all that. As the gloom round them retreated and he was able to see, first the full outline of *Marlborough*'s hull, then the shades of colour in the water, and then the horizon all round them, the triumph of the moment grew and warmed within him, dissolving all other feeling. By God, he thought, we can keep going for ever like this . . .

They were forty miles to the good already: there were only 260 more—three more nights, three more heartening dawns such as this: and *Marlborough*, creeping ahead over the smooth paling sea, was as strong as ever.

If they could hold on to that (he touched the wood of his chair) then they were home.

At eight o'clock, the change of the watch, he called Leading Seaman Tapper to the bridge, and told him to turn over the wheel to the regular quartermaster and to take over as officer of the watch. It was irregular (he smiled as he realized how irregular), but he had to get some rest and there was no one else available to take his place: Chief was owed many hours of sleep, the doctor had been up all night with the midshipman, Adams had been on the wheel since four o'clock. It simply could not be helped.

He lay down at the back of the bridge, drew the hood of his duffle coat over his face, and closed his eyes against the frosty light. It was such bliss to relax at last, to sink away from care, that he found himself grinning foolishly. Fourteen hours on the bridge: and God knows how many the night before . . . He would have to watch that. Might get the doc. to fix him up. Leading Seaman Tapper—*Acting* Leading Seaman Tapper . . . No, it couldn't be helped. In any case there was nothing to guard, nothing to watch for, nothing for them to fight with. Now, they had simply to endure.

IT was at midday that the wind began to freshen, from the south. The noise, slight as it was, woke the Captain. It began as no more than an occasional wave-slap against the bows, and a gentle lifting to the increased swell; but into his deep drugged sleep it stabbed like a sliver of ice.

He lay still for a moment, getting the feel of the ship again, guessing at what had happened: by the way *Marlborough* was moving, the wind was slightly off the bow, and already blowing crisply. Then he stood up, shook off his blankets, and walked to the front of the bridge.

It was as he had thought: a fresh breeze, curling the wave-top, was now meeting them, about twenty degrees off the starboard bow. Of the two, that was the better side, as it kept the torpedoed area under shelter: but the angle was still bad, it could still impart to

their progress a twisting movement which might become a severe strain. While he was considering it, Adams came up to relieve Tapper, and they all three stood in silence for a moment, watching the waves as they slapped and broke against *Marlborough*'s lowered bows.

"You'd better go back on the wheel, Adams," said the Captain presently. "If this gets any worse we'll have to turn directly into it, and slow down."

It did get worse, in the next hour he spent in his chair, and when the first wave, breaking right over the bows, splashed the fo'c'sle itself, he rang the bell to the engine-room. Chief himself answered.

"I'll have to take the revs: off, Chief, I'm afraid," he said. "It's getting too lively altogether. What are they now?"

"Thirty-five, sir."

"Make that twenty. Have you got a hand on the bulkhead?"

"No, sir. I'll put one on."

"Right." He turned to the wheel-house voice-pipe. "Steer south, twenty-five east, Adams. And tell me if she's losing steerage-way. I want to keep the wind dead ahead."

"Aye, aye, sir."

The alteration, and the decrease in speed, served them well for an hour: then it suddenly seemed to lose its effect, and their movements became thoroughly strained and awkward. He decreased speed again, to fifteen revolutions—bare steerage-way—but still the awkwardness and the distress persisted: it became a steady thumping as each wave hit them, a recurrent lift-and-crunch which might have been specially designed to threaten their weakest point.

It was now blowing steadily and strongly from the south: he listened to the wind rising with a murderous attention. At about half-past three it backed suddenly to the south-east, and he followed it: it meant they were heading for home again—the sole good point in a situation rapidly deteriorating.

He looked at the seas running swiftly past them, and felt the ones breaking at the bows, and he knew that all their advantage was ebbing away from them. This was how it had been when he had been ready to abandon ship, three nights ago; it was this that was going to destroy them.

Quick steps rang on the bridge ladder, and he turned. It was the Chief: in the failing light his face looked grey and defeated.

"That bulkhead can't take this, sir," he began immediately. "I've been in to have a look, and it's started working again—there's the same leak down that seam. We'll have to stop."

The Captain shook his head. "That's no good, Chief. If we stop in this sea, we'll just bang ourselves to bits." A big wave hit them as he spoke, breaking down on the bows, driving them under. *Marlborough* came up from it very slowly indeed. "We've got to keep head to wind, at all costs."

"Can we go any slower, sir?"

"No. She'll barely steer as it is."

Another wave took them fair and square on the fo'c'sle, sweeping along the upper deck as *Marlborough* sagged into the trough. The

wind tugged at them. It was as if the death-bed scene were starting all over again.

The Chief looked swiftly at the Captain. "Could we go astern into it?"

"Probably pull the bows off, Chief."

"Better than this, sir. This is just murder."

"Yes . . . All right . . . She may not come round." He leant over to the voice-pipe. "Stop starboard."

"Stop starboard, sir." The telegraph clanged.

"Adams, I'm going astern, and up into the wind stern first. Put the wheel over hard a-starboard."

"Hard a-starboard, sir."

"Slow astern starboard."

The bell clanged again. "Starboard engine slow astern, wheel hard a-starboard, sir."

"Very good."

They waited. Those few minutes before *Marlborough* gathered stern-way were horrible. She seemed to be standing in the jaws of the wind and sea, mutely undergoing a wild torture. She came down upon one wave with so solid a crash that it seemed impossible that the whole bows should not be wrenched off: a second, with a cruelty and malice almost deliberate, hit them a treacherous slewing blow on the port side.

Slowly *Marlborough* backed away, shaking and staggering as if from a mortal thrust. The compass faltered, and started very slowly to turn: then as the wind caught the bows she began to swing sharply. He called out: "Watch it, Adams! Meet her! Bring her head on to north-west," and his hands as he gripped the pedestal were as white as the compass-card.

The last few moments, before *Marlborough* was safely balanced with her stern into the teeth of the wind, were like the sweating end of a nightmare.

Behind him the Chief sighed deeply. "Thank God for that. What revs. do you want, sir?"

"We'll try twenty."

IT was by now almost dark. *Marlborough* settled down to her awkward progress: first Adams and then Tapper wrestled steadily to keep her stern to the wind, while the waves mounted and steepened and broke solidly upon the quarter-deck.

That whole night, which the Captain spent on the bridge, had a desperate quality of unrelieved distress. All the time the wind blew with great force from the south-east, all the time the seas ran against them as if powered by a living hate, and the vicious spray lashed the funnel and the bridge structure.

At first light it began to snow: the driving clouds settled and lay thick all over them, crusting the upper deck in total icy whiteness. *Marlborough* might have been sailing backwards off a Christmas cake . . . but still, with unending, hopeless persistence, she butted her way southwards.

Five days later—one hundred and twenty-one hours—she was still doing it. The snow was gone, and the gale had eased to a stiff southerly breeze ; but the sea was still running too high for them to risk turning their bows into it, and so they maintained, stern first, their ludicrous progress.

The whole afterpart of the ship had been drenched with water ever since they turned ; the ward-room had been made uninhabitable by a leaking skylight, the alleyway in which the men slept was six inches awash with a frothy residue of spray. It was hardly to be wondered at, thought the Captain as he slopped through it on his way back to the bridge : poor old *Marlborough* hadn't been designed for this sort of thing.

He was very tired. He had hardly had two consecutive hours of sleep in the last five days : the strain had settled in his face like a tight and ugly mask.

The doctor had done his best to relieve him, by taking an occasional spell on the bridge when the remaining four serious patients could be left ; but even this seemed of no avail—his weariness, and the hours of concentration on *Marlborough*'s foolish movements, pursued him like a hypnosis, twitching his eyelids when he sought sleep, making his scalp prickle and the brain inside flutter. Hope of rest was destroyed by a twanging tension such as sometimes made him want to scream aloud.

When he sat down in his chair on that fifth night of stern-way—the ninth since they were torpedoed—and hunched his stiff shoulders against the cold, he was conscious of nothing save an appalling lassitude. Even to stare and search ahead, in quest of those shore-lights that never showed themselves, was effort enough to make him feel sick in doing it.

He had no idea where they were. They had seen nothing—no lights at night, no aircraft, not a single smudge of smoke anywhere on the horizon. The sextant had been smashed by the shellfire, and there was no sun anyway to take sights by. Even at two knots, even at one and a half, they should have raised Butt of Lewis light by now, if their course were correct.

That was the hellish, the insane part of it. Probably it wasn't correct : probably the torpedoing and the weight-shifting had put everything out, and the magnetic compasses were completely haywire. Probably they were heading straight out into the Atlantic instead of pointing for home.

And Hell ! he thought, this bloody cock-eyed way of steaming . . . you couldn't tell where the ship was going to. They might be anywhere. They might be going round in circles, digging their own grave.

Bridger, the admirable unassailable Bridger, appeared at his elbow. The cup of cocoa which seemed to be part of his right arm was once more tendered. While he drank it, Bridger stood in silence, looking out at the sea. Then he said :

" Easing off a bit, sir."

" Just a little, yes."

There was another pause: then Bridger added: "It's a lot drier aft, sir."

"Good." It was impossible not to respond to this effort at raising his spirits, or to be unaffected by it; and he said suddenly: "What do the hands think about all this?"

It was the sort of question he had never before asked any rating except the Coxswain.

Bridger considered. It was entirely novel to him, too; what the lower deck thought of things, and what they said about them to their officers, were two differing aspects of truth. At length:

"They're a bit sick of the corned beef, sir."

The Captain laughed, for the first time for many days. "Is that all?"

"Just about, sir. But we're having a sweepstake on when we get in."

For some reason the Captain felt like crying at that one. He said, after a moment:

"Has your number come up yet?"

"No, sir. Six more days to run."

There was much more that the Captain wanted to ask: did they really think *Marlborough* would get in: were they still confident in his judgment, after all these days and nights of blundering along: did they trust him absolutely?—questions he would never even have thought of, save in a light-headed hunger for reassurance. But suddenly Bridger said:

"They hope you're getting enough sleep, sir!"

Then he sucked in his breath, as though discovered in some appalling breach of discipline, took the cup from the top of the compass, and quickly left the bridge.

Alone once more, the Captain smiled tautly at the most moving thing that had ever been said to him, and settled back in his chair to take up the watch again. He *wasn't* getting enough sleep, but the fact that the ship's company realized this, and wished him well over it, was as sustaining and comforting as a strong arm round his shoulders.

IN the morning of the tenth day since they were torpedoed, he had a conference with the Chief on the bridge. They had seen little of each other during the preceding time: five days of having the reversing gear in continuous action had proved an unaccustomed strain, and the Chief had been kept busy below, nursing the one remaining engine through its ordeal. Now, at nine o'clock, he had come up with some fresh news.

"Have you noticed the fo'c'sle, sir?"

"No, Chief, I hadn't." After yet another night on the bridge he felt no more and no less tired than usual: he seemed to be living in some nether hell of weariness which nothing could deepen. "What's happened to it?"

"The bows have started to bend upwards again." He pointed. "You can just about see it from here, sir. There's a kink in the deck, like folding a bit of paper."

"You mean the whole thing's being pulled off."

"Something like that, sir. It's a slow process, but if it gets any worse we'll lose the buoyancy of the fore-peak, and that may bring the screws out of the water again."

"What's the answer, technically?"

"Either slow down to nothing, or turn round and push them on again."

The Captain gestured irritably. "My God, it's like fooling around with a bundle of scrap-iron! 'Push the bows on again'—it sounds like some blasted lid off a tin!"

"Yes, sir." While Chief waited for the foolish spasm to spend itself, he wondered idly what the Captain *really* thought *Marlborough* should be like, after what she had gone through. "Bundle of scrap-iron" wasn't far wide of the mark: she could float, she could lollop along backwards, and that was about all. "Well, that's the choice, sir," he said presently. "I don't think we can carry on like this much longer."

The Captain got hold of himself again: at this late hour, he wasn't going to start dramatizing the situation. It was all this damned tiredness . . . "We could just about turn round now," he said slowly, looking at the sea with its long rolling swell and occasional breaking wave-tops. "It was a lot worse than this before we turned last time."

"About how far have we got to go, sir?"

"I don't know, Chief." He did not make the mistake of admitting his ignorance in a totally normal voice, but he managed to imply that there was nothing to be gained either by a full discussion of it, or by surrendering to its hopeless implication. "If we were on our proper course we should have raised Butt of Lewis a long time ago. Probably the compasses are faulty. I'm just going to keep on like this till we hit something."

Stopping, and turning the bows into the wind again, was an even slower process than it had been five days earlier: at times it seemed that *Marlborough*, lying lumpishly off the wind and butting those fragile bows against the run of the waves, *would not* come up to her course.

The Captain dared not increase speed, in order to give the rudder more leverage; and so for a full half-hour they tumbled athwart the wave-troughs, gaining a point on the compass-card, sagging back again, wavering on and off the wind like a creaking weathercock that no one trusts any longer. Down in the wheel-house, Leading Seaman Tapper leant against the wheel which he had put hard a-starboard, and waited, his eyes on the compass-card. If she wouldn't, she wouldn't: no good worrying, no good fiddling about . . .

All over the ship, during the past few days, that sort of thing had been growing: things either went right, or they didn't, and that was all there was to it. Between a deep weariness and a deeper fatalism, the whole crew accepted the situation, and were carried sluggishly along with it.

At the end of half an hour a lull allowed *Marlborough* to come round on her course. She settled down again slowly, as if she did not really believe in it, but knew she had no choice. South-east, it was, and one and a half knots.

It *must* bring them home. It had to.

IT did not bring them home : it did not seem to bring them anywhere. They steamed all that day, and all the next, and all the next, and all the next : four more days and nights, to add to the fantastic total of that south-easterly passage. But *was* it a south-easterly passage ?—for if so, they should by now have been right through Scotland, and out the other side : eleven days steaming, it added up to, and thirteen days since they had been torpedoed. It just didn't make sense.

The weather did not help. It did not deteriorate, it did not improve : the stiff breeze held all the time, the sloppy uneven sea came running at them for hour after hour and day after day. The ship took it all with a tough determination which could not disguise a steady progressive breaking down. The bulkhead wavered and creaked, the water ran down the splitting seam, slopped about on the deck, increased in weight till it began to drag the bows down to a fatal level.

The noise mounted gradually to an appalling racket : clanging, groaning, knocking, protesting—the whole hull in pain, ill-treated as an old galled horse sweating against the collar, fit only for the knacker's yard but hardly strong enough to drag itself there. Gallant, ramshackle, on her last legs, *Marlborough* bumped and rolled southwards, at a pace which was itself a wretched trial of patience.

Above all, there was now a smell—a sweetish, sickish smell seeping up the ventilators from the fo'c'sle.

It penetrated to every part of the ship, it hung in the wind, it followed them till there seemed to be nothing around them in the sea or the sky but the gross stink of the dead, those seventy-odd corpses which they carried with them as their obscene ballast. It could not be escaped anywhere in the ship. Every man on board lived with it, tried to shut it out with sleep, woke with it sweet and beastly in his nostrils. It became the unmentionable horror that attended them wherever they went.

They all hated it, but there was so much more to hate. The tiredness of overstrained men working four hours on and four hours off, for day after day and night after night, lay all over the ship, a tangible weight of weariness that affected every yard of their progress.

The ship's company, whether watching on the upper deck or tending the boilers and the engine-room, moved in a tired dream barely distinguishable from sleep.

A grotesque fatigue assailed them all : they stayed on watch till their eyes ran raw and their bodies seemed ready to crumple : they ate like men who could scarcely move their jaws against some dry and tasteless substance : they fell asleep where they dropped, wedged

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against ventilators, curled up like bundles of rags in odd corners of the deck.

All of them were filthy, bearded, grimed with spray and smoke: there was no water to wash with, no change of clothes, nothing to hearten them but tea and hard biscuit and corned beef, for every meal of every day of the voyage. All over the ship one met them, or stumbled over them: wild-eyed, dirty, slightly mad. And all round them, and above and below, hung that smell of death, a thick enveloping curtain, the price of sea-power translated into a squalid and disgusting currency.

And the Captain . . . he summed up, in his person, all that tiredness, all that stress and dirt, all that wild fatigue. He had had the least sleep of anyone on board, throughout the thirteen days: at the end of it he still held the whole thing in his grip, but it was a grip that had another quality besides strength—it had something cracked and desperate about it. His was the worry, his the responsibility, his the appalling doubt as to whether they were really going anywhere at all: he held on because there was no choice, because they could not give up, above all because this was *Marlborough*, his own ship, and he would not surrender her to God or man or the sea. Like a lover, light-headed and despairing, he hoped and strove and would not be forsworn.

The bridge was now his prison . . . Wedged in his chair, chin on hand, a small thing was beginning to obsess him. On one of the instruments in front of him there was a splash of dried blood, overlooked when they cleaned up after the shell-burst. It had an odd shape, like a boot, like Italy: but the silly thing was that when he looked to one side that shape seemed to change, spinning round and round like a windmill, expanding and contracting as if the blood still lived and still moved to a pulse. He tried to catch it moving, but when he stared at it directly it became Italy again, a dirty brownish smear that no one wanted.

He roared out suddenly: "Signalman!" and then: "For the Lord's sake clean that off—it's filthy!" and when the man, staring, set to work on the job, he watched him as if his sanity depended on it. Then he looked ahead again, scanning the horizon, the damned crystal-clear horizon.

No change there: no shadow, no smudge of smoke, nothing. Where were they going to? Was there anything ahead but deep water? Was he leading *Marlborough*, and the wretched remnant of her ship's company, on a fantastic chase into the blue? And God Almighty! That smell from forrard . . . It was like a curse, clamped down hard on their necks. Perhaps they were all going to perish of it in the end: perhaps the whole ship and her dead and dying crew, welded together in a solid mass of corruption, would one night dip soundlessly beneath the sea and touch bottom a thousand fathoms below.

AT 4 a.m. on the morning of January 14th, Petty Officer Adams came up on the bridge, to see the Captain before taking over the wheel.

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He had a pair of binoculars slung beneath the hood of his duffle coat, and from force of habit he raised them and swept slowly round the horizon, a barely distinguishable line of shadow on that black moonless night. He did this twice: then, on the verge of lowering his glasses, he checked suddenly and stared for a long minute ahead, blinking at the rawness, the watery eye-strain, which even this slight effort induced. Then he said, in a compressed, almost croaking voice:

"There's a light dead ahead, sir."

The words fell into the silence of the bridge like a rock in a pool. They all whipped up their glasses and stared in turn—the Captain, the signalman, Bridger, with his cocoa-cup forgotten: all of them intent, tremendously alert, checking their breathing as if afraid of losing an instant's concentration. Then Adams said again:

"There it is, sir—only the loom of it, but you can see it sweeping across."

And the Captain, answering him, said very softly: "Yes."

It *was* a light—the faintest lifting of the gloom in the sky, like a spectral fan opening and closing, like a whisper—but it *was* a light.

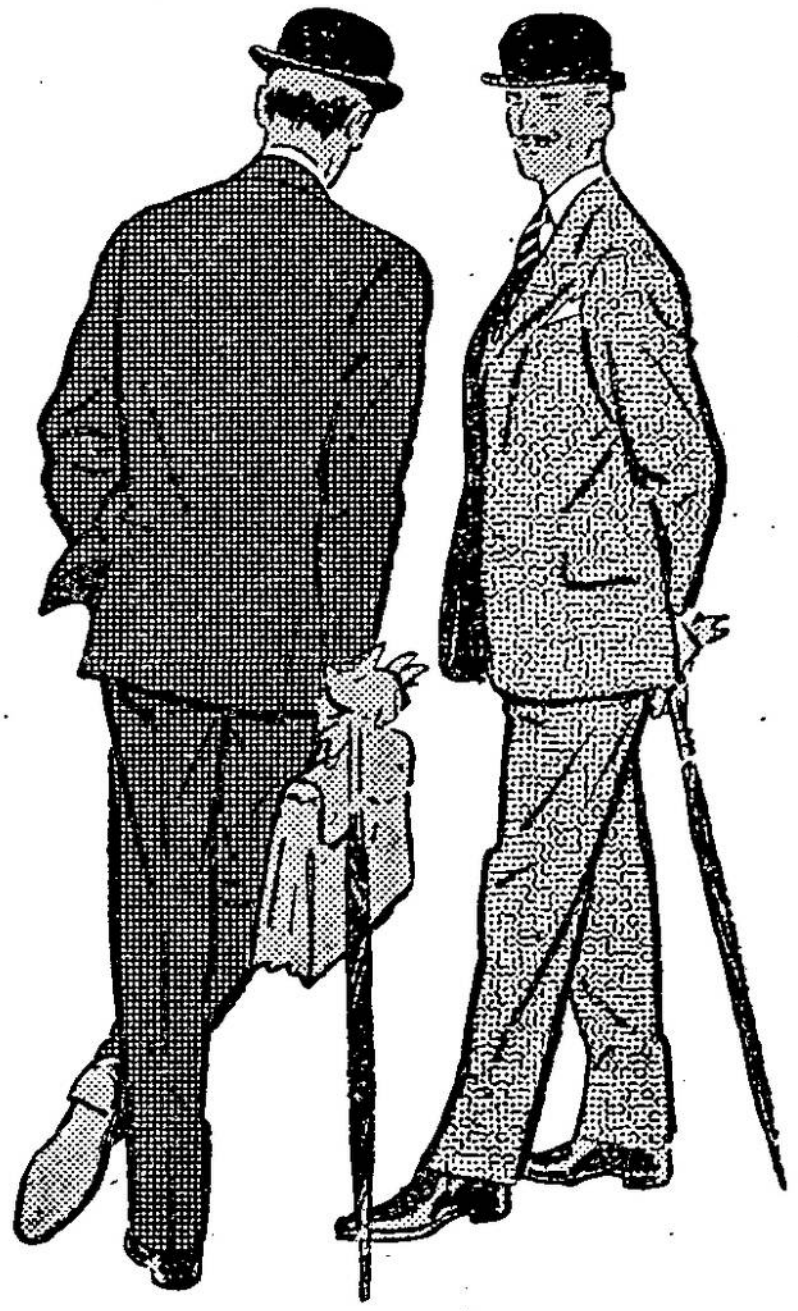
For a moment, the Captain was childishly annoyed that he had not seen it first: and then a terrific and overpowering relief seemed to rise in his throat, choking him, pricking his eyes, flooding all over his body in a shaking spasm. The soreness which he had felt round his heart all through the last few days rose to an agonizing twinge and then fell away, leaving him weak, almost gasping. He found the light again, and then dropped his binoculars and leant against his chair. The wish to cry, at the end of the fourteen days' tension, was almost insupportable.

Round him the others reacted in their own way, contributing to a moment of release so extraordinary that no extravagance of movement or word could have been out of place. The cup which Bridger had placed on a ledge fell and shattered. The signalman was whistling an imitation of a bosun's pipe, a triumphant skirl of sound. Adams, unknowing, muttered: "Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ," over and over again, in a voice from which everything save a sober humility had disappeared.

They were men in a moment of triumph and of weakness, as vulnerable as young children, as unstable, as near to ecstasy or to weeping in the same single breath. They were men in entrancement.

It *was* a light—and soon there were others; three altogether, winking and beckoning them towards the vast promise of the horizon. The Captain took a grip of himself, the tightest grip yet, and went into the chart-house to work them out; while all over the ship men, awakened by some extraordinary urgency which ran everywhere like a licking flame, leant over the rails, and stared and whispered and laughed at what they saw.

Lights ahead—land—home—they'd made it after all. Some of them stared up at the bridge, seeing nothing but feeling that they were looking at the heart of the ship, the thing that had brought them home, the man who more than anyone had worked the miracle.



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And then they would go back to the lights again, and count the flashes, and start singing or cursing in ragged chorus.

There was no one anywhere in the ship who did not share in this moment: the hands on the upper deck shouted the news down to the engine-room, the signalman on the bridge gave a breathless running commentary to the wheel-house. The release from ordeal moved them all to the same wild exaltation.

ONLY the Captain, faced by the array of charts on the table, no longer shared the full measure of their relief. For he was now concentrating on something else, something he could not make out at all.

They were lights all right—but what lights? The one that Adams had first seen was not Butt of Lewis: the other two did not seem to fit any part of the chart, either Lewis or the mainland round Cape Wrath, or the scattered islands centred on Scapa Flow and the Orkneys.

He checked them again, he laid off the bearings on a piece of tracing-paper and then moved it here and there on the chart, hesitatingly, like a child with its first jigsaw puzzle. He even moved it up to Iceland, but the answer would not come—and it was an answer they *must* have before very long: they were running into something, closing an unknown coastline which might have any number of hazards—outlying rocks, dangerous overfalls, minefields barring any approach except by a single swept channel.

Sucking his pencil, frowning at the harsh lamplight, he strove to find the answer: even at this last moment, delay might rob them of their triumph. But the answer would not come.

Presently he opened the chart-house door and came out again, ready to take fresh bearings and to make doubly certain of what the lights showed.

Both the doctor and the Chief were now on the bridge, talking in low voices through which ran a strong note of satisfaction and assurance. The Chief turned as he heard the step, and then jerked his head at the lights.

"Finest sight I've seen in my life, sir."

The Captain smiled. "Same here, Chief."

"Is that Butt of Lewis, sir?" asked the doctor.

"No." He raised his glasses, checked the number of the flashes, and bent to the compass to take a fresh bearing. "No, Doc., I haven't worked out what it is yet."

"It's something solid, anyway."

"Enough for me," said the Chief. "All I want is the good old putty, anywhere between Cape Wrath and the Longships."

To himself the Captain thought: I wish I could guarantee that.

"Another light, sir!" exclaimed the signalman suddenly. "Port bow—about four-oh."

The Captain raised his glasses once more.

"There it is, sir," said the signalman again, before the Captain had found it. "It's a red one this time."

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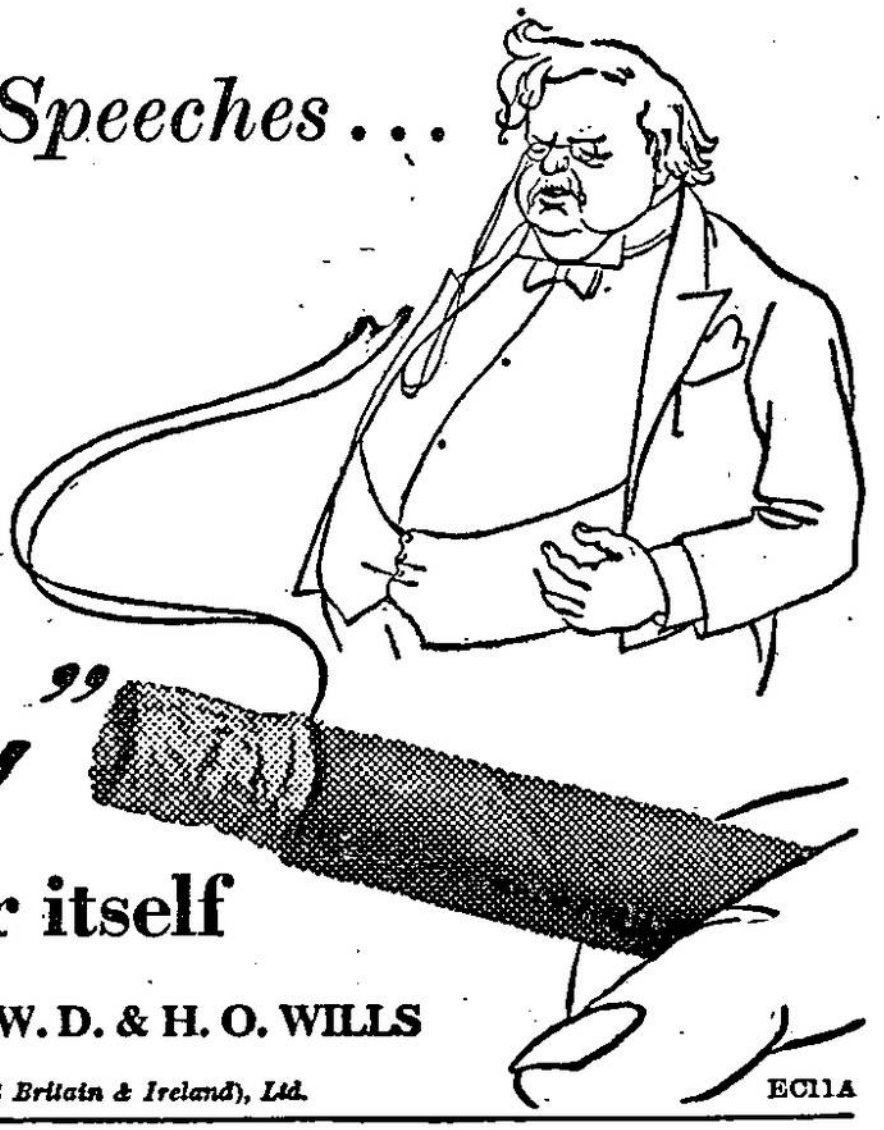

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"Red?"

"Yes, sir. I got it clearly then."

Red . . . that rang a bell, by God! There was a red light at the end of Rathlin Island, off the north coast of Ireland: it was the only one he could remember, in fact. But Rathlin Island. He walked quickly into the chart-house, and moved the tracing-paper southwards.

The jigsaw suddenly resolved itself. It *was* Rathlin: the light they had first seen was Inishtrahull, the others were Inishowen and something else he could not check—probably an aircraft beacon.

Rathlin Island—that meant that they had come all down the coast of Scotland, over two hundred miles farther than he had thought: it meant that they must have been steering at least fifteen degrees off their proper course.

Those bloody compasses! But what did it matter now? Rathlin Island. They could put in at Londonderry and get patched up, and then go home. Northern Ireland instead of Butt of Lewis—that would look good in the Report. But what the hell *did* it matter? They had made their landfall.

He walked back to his chair, sat down, and said, in as level a voice as he had ever used:

"That's the north coast of Ireland. We'll be going to Derry."

IT was a peerless morning: the clean grey sky, flecked with pearly grey clouds, turned suddenly to gold as the sun climbed over the eastern horizon.

There was now land ahead: a dark bluish coastline, with noble hills beyond.

The Captain's stiff stubbly face warmed slowly to the sunshine: the ache across his shoulders and round his heart seemed to melt away, taking with it his desperate fatigue. Not much longer—and then sleep, and sleep, and sleep . . . Bridger handed him the morning cup of cocoa, his face one enormous grin. But all he said was: "Cocoa, sir."

"Thanks . . . We made it, Bridger."

"Yes, sir."

"Who won that sweepstake?"

"The Buffer, sir—I mean, Petty Officer Adams."

The Captain laughed aloud. "Bad luck!"

For the ship's company that must be the one flaw in an otherwise perfect morning.

There were a lot of the hands on the upper deck now, smiling and pointing. He felt bound to them as closely as one man can be to another.

Later, he wanted to find some words that would give them an idea of that. And something about *Marlborough*, too, the ship he loved, the ship they had all striven for.

"Trawlers ahead, sir," said the signalman, breaking in on his thoughts. "Three of them. I think they're sweeping."

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A pause, while the lamps flickered. Then:

"Reply, 'Yes,' sir!"

"Right. Make: 'Will you pass a message to the Port War Signal Station for me, please?'"

Another pause.

"Reply, 'Certainly,' sir."

The Captain drew a long breath, conscious deep within him of an enormous satisfaction. "Write this down, and then send it to them. 'To Flag Officer in Charge, Londonderry, v. *Marlborough*.

"'H.M.S. *Marlborough* will enter harbour at 1300 today.

"'Ship is severely damaged above and below waterline. Request pilot, tugs, dockyard assistance, and burial arrangements for one officer and seventy-two ratings.' Got that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Right. Send it off . . . Bridger!"

"Sir?"

"Ask the surgeon-lieutenant to relieve me for an hour. I'm going to shave. And wash. And change. And then eat."

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SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 144

Across. 5, Sicily. 8, Cornhill. 9, Tom cat. 10, Mistaken. 11, Picnic. 12, Home-made. 15, Redan. 16, Long-legs. 19, Relaxing. 24, Slade. 27, On parole. 28, Garlic. 29, Dormouse. 30, Margin. 31, Anteroom. 32, Remote.

Down. 1, Monitor. 2, Knitted. 3, Milkman. 4, Flannel. 5, Sat upon. 6, Comical. 7, Leaning. 13, Meal. 14, Manx. 17, Gala. 18, Endo. 20, Emanate. 21, Allegro. 22, Incense. 23, Good day. 24, Spirits. 25, Armoury. 26, Elision.

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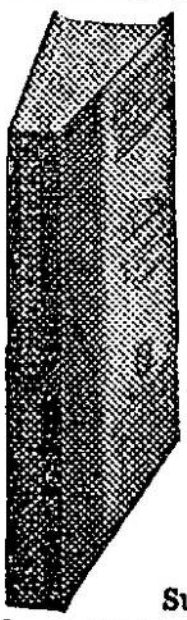

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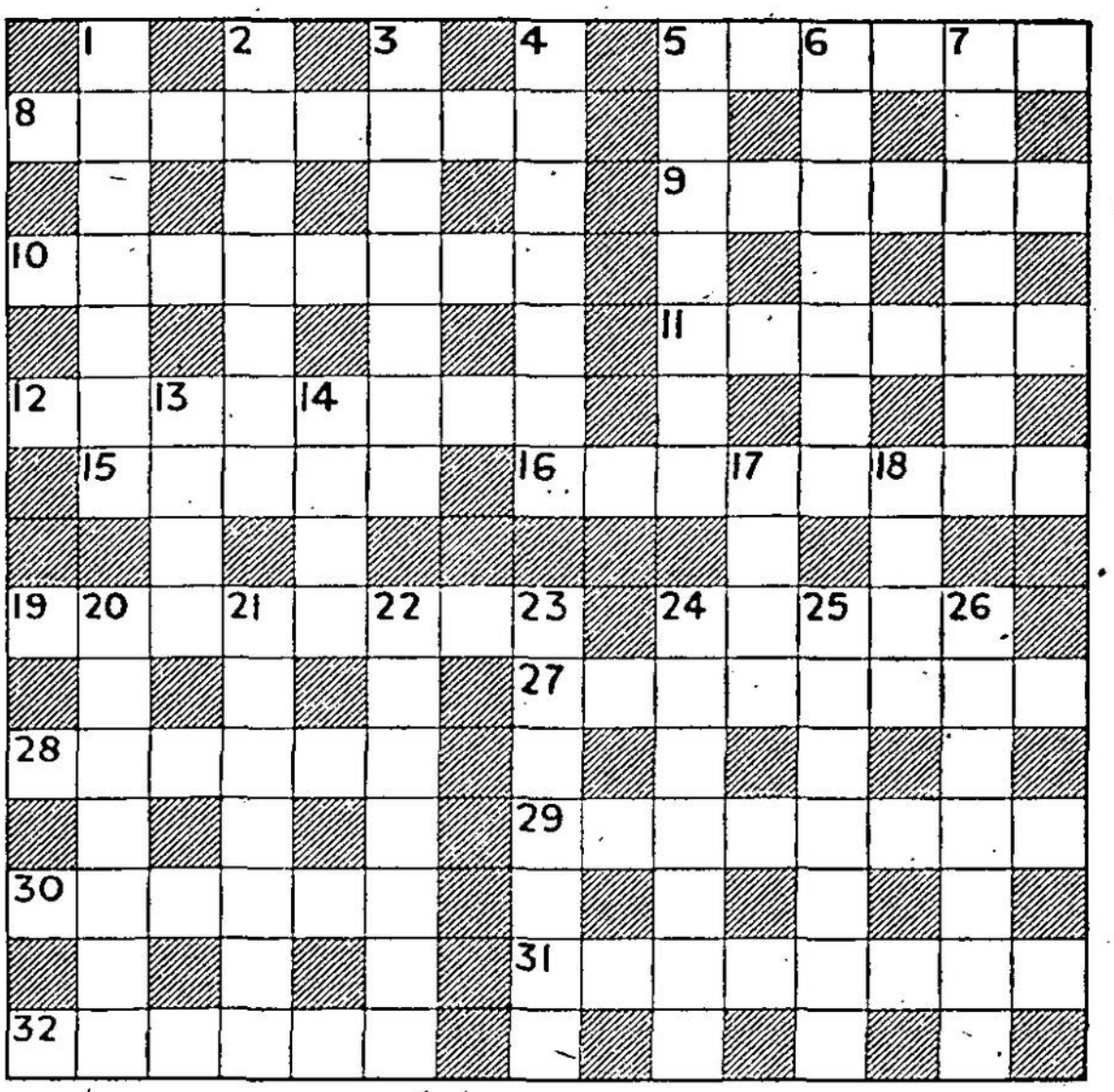
Solution on page 142



CLUES

Across

5 "O Singer of Persephone! In the dim meadows desolate Dost thou remember ——?" (Oscar Wilde) (6).

8 The first part of this City street no longer grows there (8).

9 He is rarely a tortoise-shell! (3, 3).

10 One thousand is removed in error (8).

11 Meal for outsiders? (6).

12 Quite the reverse of mass-produced (4-4).

15 The dean is hiding in part of the defences (5).

16 Daddy flies in advance of these (4-4).

19 A broken axle in the ring has a slackening effect (8).

24 Art in the dales (5).

27 State of no escape (2, 6).

28 "I had rather live with cheese and — in a windmill" (Shakespeare) (6).

29 It could even sleep in a tea pot (8).

30 This is always on the verge of getting into print (6).

31 Not usually used as a gaming saloon! (8).

32 The meteor is a long way off (6).

Down

1 He should always be on top of his form! (7).

2 This is work for two pins (7).

3 A bottle party, so to speak, with T.T. leanings (7).

4 Material which is partly pastry (7).

5 Snubbed like a chair (3, 4).

6 It's very funny that there should be mica in the middle of the pass (7).

7 The inclination of a famous structure at Pisa (7).

13 This gives satistaction all round when square (4).

14 X marks the spot where an island becomes one of its inhabitants (4).

17 A lag turned up at the festivities (4).

18 There's nothing at the end of this prefix (4).

20 Proceed, though a name is backwards at the start (7).

21 All ego and a little more make a lively tempo (7).

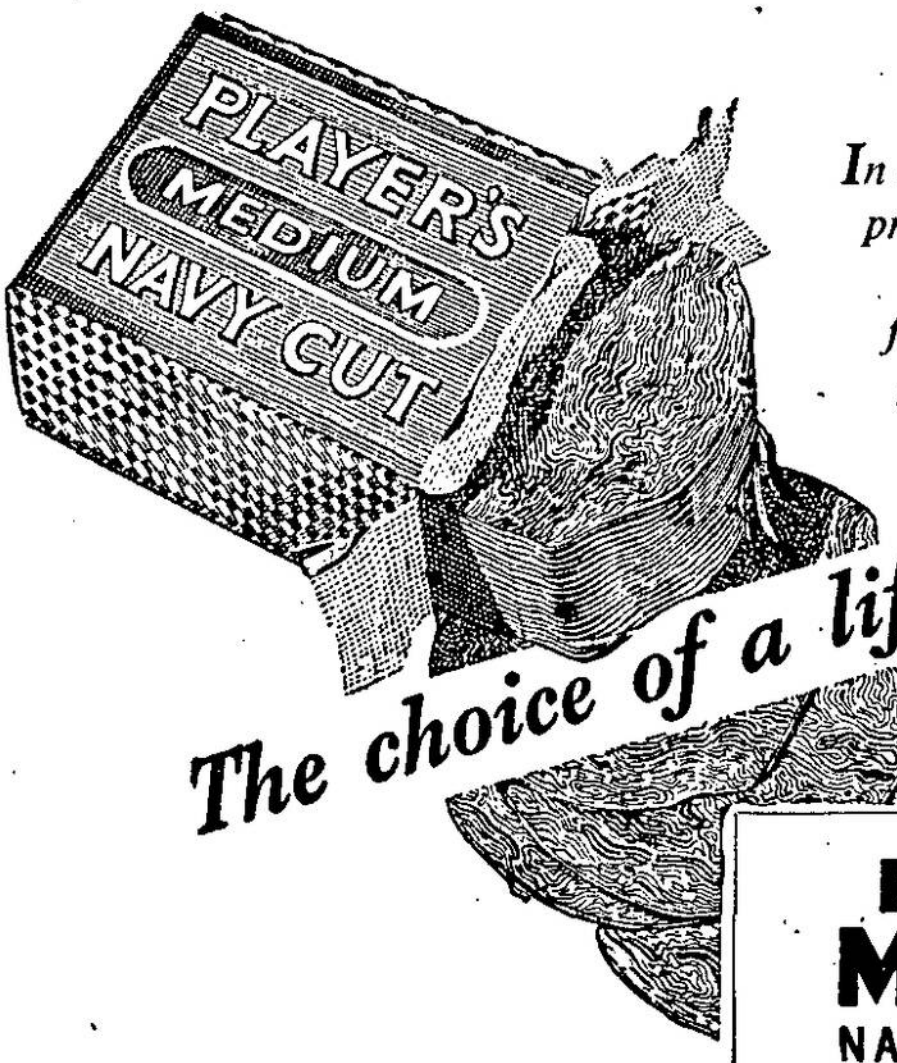
22 Not the frank variety but nevertheless very aromatic (7).

23 A greeting which does not necessarily imply a favourable comment on conditions (4, 3).

24 Some put them down to keep them up (7).

25 Our position in the army covers the arsenal (7).

26 This omission is a slur but not a sin (7).



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Student 357/3015: I have had my story accepted by **BLACKWOODS** who are paying me £25 for it . . . *Student 778/2119:* I thought it might interest you to know that **THE COUNTRYMAN** has accepted a short article of mine on an old country custom . . . *Student 184/315:* As you suggested, I submitted the articles to the **NEW STATESMAN.** One was published on the 17th July. I have also had an article accepted by **MEN ONLY** . . . *Student 181/282:* You may be interested to hear that I had a letter from the Editor of **ARGOSY**; they have offered me Twenty-five Guineas for my story . . . *Student 591/287:* You will be pleased that my article submitted for my Second Lesson was published in the **DAILY MIRROR** and I received Six Guineas for it . . . *Student 120/288:* I have established contact with the Editor of **PUNCH.** The item was accepted for "Charivaria" and is a good start . . . *Student 1179/347:* I succeeded in getting four Big Game stories into **COURIER** and another about "Shrove Tuesday." Another article appeared in the August issue of **BLACKWOODS** . . . *Student 1954/157:* I have just corrected a proof of my story for **WIDE WORLD**; they have since accepted another and I have sent in a third . . . *Student 171/162:* I have sold my story to **EVERYWOMAN** for 25 guineas . . . *Student 1106/156:* The **B.B.C.** accepted the script for the Light Programme—fee 9 guineas—after my first lesson . . . *Student 141/76:* The article which I wrote for the Second Test Paper appeared in the **SUNDAY MAIL.** Thanks for the recommendation. . . . . .

A. Facey